

IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lucca

Lucca, Italy

**Make Rome Great Again! Presenting the Murder of Julius
Caesar in the Time of Facebook**

PhD Program in Institutions, Markets and Technologies
Curriculum in Analysis and Management of Cultural
Heritage

XXXII Cycle

By

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2020

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2020

To Maria Wyke

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most sincerely grateful to Professor Maria Luisa Catoni and Professor Ana Peraica for guiding me through this rewarding and exhausting adventure of doing such an overwhelming research. From Day 1 they have both been a lighthouse and motivators that kept me going through the phases when this research felt particularly overwhelming. They've also been an extraordinary inspiration not only for their scholarly achievements, scientific rigour, but also on a personal note. They knew when to put challenges in front of me and when to show more support, and for that I am most grateful to them. I am also very grateful to the external reviewers for their thorough reading of my thesis, thoughtful and challenging comments, and valuable suggestions. I also thank Dr. Yesim Tonga Uriarte for her help in the first stages of this research. I am indebted to Professor Maria Wyke for her generous and intensive mentoring she provided during my 12-month research period at University College London. I dedicate this thesis to her. I am grateful also to professors and colleagues from IMT, who made this PhD such a thought-provoking and inspiring experience: Linda Bertelli, Lorenzo Casini, Emanuele Pellegrini, Tullio Viola, Marco Brunetti, Anna Pirri Valentini, Alice Martinelli, Haneen Hannouch, George-Adrian Iordachescu, Beyza Uzun, Hakan Tarhan, Felicia Caponigri, Agnese Ghezzi, Zorica Savanović, Elisa Bernard and Tiziano Antognozzi. A particularly gigantic thank-You goes to the one-of-a-kind staff of IMT and IMT Library, who were an immense help and support in so

many different ways throughout my PhD, especially: Daniela Giorgetti, Caterina Tangheroni, Leonardo Mezzina, Andrea Ceravolo, Antonella Barbuti, Barbara Iacobino, Lara Bertoncini, Serena Argentieri, Maria Mateos Irigoyen and Sara Olson.

Different people have been a source of inspiration, knowledge and/or support during this PhD adventure, and I wish to thank them in particular: Antonio Chiaese, Sabina Pavone, Valeria Merola, Enika Bushi, Beatrice Montorfano, Ivan Lupić, Domenico Lovascio, Živa Kraus, Rev Fr Ljubomir Šimunović, as well as the organizers and participants of the *Shakespeare's Rome International Summer School* and of the panel *Cultural mobility around Shakespeare* at the 2019 ESRA conference: Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Maddalena Pennacchia, Michela Compagnoni, Shaul Bassi, Katherine Gillen, Lalita Pandit Hogan, Sujata Iyengar, Lesley Ferarcho. I thank *Gruppo Storico Romano*, especially Andrea Buccolini and Sergio Iacomoni for their support in this research.

I thank my family for the unconditional love and support they have always had for me and for believing in me, especially my parents Goran and Anita, and my wife Ines.

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2. Anđelko Mihanović. 2019. "Review of Donna Zuckerberg. *Not All Dead White Men. Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age*. Harvard University Press (Cambridge 2018). 270 pp. ISBN: 9780674975552 \$27.95/£20.0/€25.00". In: *Thersites* 10, 2019, pp. 221-26; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34679/thersites.vol10.94>
3. Anđelko Mihanović. 2018. "Review of Miryana Dimitrova. *Julius Caesar's Self-Created Image and Its Dramatic Afterlife*. Bloomsbury Academic (London 2018). x & 236 pp. ISBN: 9781474245753 £85.00 (HB)". In: *Thersites* 08, 2018: pp. 151-157; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34679/thersites.vol8.99>

ABSTRACT

The assassination of Julius Caesar is an event that changed the course of history of the known world. Even today, two thousand years after his assassination, Caesar still matters, and public discourse and popular culture are important areas of his reception. In contrast to most historical cases that deal with Caesar's assassination, most recent cases, analyzed in this thesis, take the event down to the personal, individual, highly subjective, local level: a historical reenactment, a cinematic appropriation, and a theatrical staging in a prison. The research involved developing and creating intersections between a wide range of theoretical approaches in order best to interrogate the contemporary case studies of individuals who enact Caesar's murder. The project is also complex because it involves different kinds of analysis of literary, ethnographic (itself both direct and indirect) and digital data, and it includes comparison across media (historical reenactment, prison theatre, film, digital) and across cultural communities (Roman reenactors, prisoners). In order to address the aforementioned questions I employ several methodologies: literary analysis, discourse analysis, and different methods from the field of Cultural Anthropology (semi-structured in-depth interviews, informal interviews, qualitative surveys, participant observation and unobtrusive observation for data collection, and thematic coding, ethnography and thick description for data analysis).

These performances of the dictator's assassination entail a sense of cultural heritage as a personal possession, heritage as therapy, heritage as shaping one's national, local, political, social and gender identities. The historical reenactment proves to be a celebration of Julius Caesar, Romanness and of Roman roots of the Italian national identity and culture.

1. Introduction

The assassination of Julius Caesar is an event that changed the course of history of the known world. Therefore, it has received huge attention in scholarly circles, in public discourse and in popular culture. Even today, two thousand years after his assassination, Caesar still matters, and public discourse and popular culture are important areas of his reception. Thanks to Shakespeare's dramatization of the assassination, theatre directors have evoked the historical event in order to problematize the behaviour of politicians of their time. In the twentieth century, perhaps the most famous such staging is that of Orson Welles from 1937 at the "populist and fervently liberal" Mercury Theatre (Wyke 1999, 178). A staging that enacted a mock-assassination of a Mussolini-like Caesar "exploited the familiar visual vocabulary of fascism for anti-fascist ends" (*ibid.*). Other than that one, there were other emblematic stagings of the play later in the century. As Christopher Pelling writes, "there was the 1968 version with Caesar resembling General de Gaulle – a weak old man, but the conspirators quail before him all the same; there was the 1980s presentation of a Caesar recalling Fidel Castro (played in Miami, and there again the audience's preexisting views distorted the moral balance of the piece); there was the 1993 production in London when Julius Caesar was played by a primeministerial-looking woman" (Pelling 2006, 5). In that sense one can see that the twentieth century had plenty of 'Caesars'.

The twenty-first century appears to have started in a similar way. George W. Bush was compared to Caesar, again not in a good way (Wyke 2006b, 314, 315). His successor Barack Obama was not spared of these negative comparisons as well, both theatrical and political.¹ In fact, in 2012 Rob Melrose staged Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with what appeared to be an Obama-like 'Caesar'. Still, the piece toured the whole country and it didn't cause any problems. 'Caesar' was 'killed' in slow motion and with the lights on the stage turned off. The problems were caused, however, in the summer of 2017 when Oskar Eustis's staging of *Julius Caesar* premiered at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park in New York. There a Trump-like Caesar was violently mock-killed on the stage. This caused a huge public scandal all over the country (Mihanovic 2020).

Furthermore, there is a rich history of productions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* also in Italy. It was the first Shakespeare's work that was adapted in Italy in 1726 by Antonio Conte, and translated into Italian in 1756 by Domenico Valentini (Bassi 2016, 181). It is the first Italian translation of any Shakespeare's work (Montorfano 2012, 11). The first theatrical staging of the play has been realized

¹ Recently I have published an article on Rob Melrose's Obama-like staging and Oskar Eustis's Trump-like staging of *Julius Caesar*, see: Mihanovic, Andelko. 2020. "Giulio Cesare nei panni di Barack Obama e Donald Trump? Ricezione di due controversi allestimenti teatrali delle Idi di marzo negli Stati Uniti". In: Sabina Pavone, Valeria Merola, Francesco Pirani (eds), *Personaggi storici in scena*, pp. 13-29, Macerata: University of Macerata Press.

by Ernesto Rossi in 1888 at the *Teatro Nuovo* in Florence, “more than 100 years after the translation” as Montorfano notes (2012, 10). After Rossi's staging, Montorfano lists 21 productions of the play in Italian theaters in the 20th century (2012, 8-17). She misses 2 other productions from 1978 and 1986 that Pia Vittoria Colombo includes in her PhD thesis on the reception of *Julius Caesar* in Italian theaters from 1949 to 2012 (Colombo 2015a). Montorfano, that stops her overview with 2008, and Colombo with 2012, include in total 15 more productions in the 21st century (Montorfano 2012, 8-17; Colombo 2015b). Unfortunately, Colombo's thesis is under embargo that makes it unavailable to public, although it would be useful for this discussion. Her catalogue ends with the adaptation by Andrea Baracco and Vincenzo Manna and the adaptation by Carmelo Rifici. Both received good reviews by the critics. The two adaptations used contemporary clothing. Rifici used military clothing as well, rethinking political regimes similarly to Orson Welles almost 100 years before him. Baracco's and Manna's adaptation received an award *Almagro Off* in 2012. In the same year it represented Italy at London's Globe on the occasion of the Olympic Games and it played in Italy also in 2013 and 2014. Their adaptation is very artistic, poetic, at times abstract, and looks like a mixture of struggling dandys and artists in an experimental dance or performance. However, Antony and Casca look somewhat like a kind of playboys and criminals and together with shrewd-looking Cassius they evoke Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972). Caesar is presented as a

broken shabby black chair, and his assassination is done by strokes of a red chalk in slow-motion on the chair. It is *Julius Caesar* without Caesar, and the play is centered on Brutus. The Caesar that is missing may be Silvio Berlusconi, as Sonia Massai suggested (2013, 95). What is more, Berlusconi may be 'Caesar' of another cinematic adaptation of the play of the same year, the award-winning film *Caesar Must Die* by the Taviani brothers (Bassi 2016, 184). One can see that in these years in Italy it is not unusual to think of tyranny and rotten power while thinking about the politics of the time. The performance of Barraco's play was accompanied by a *lectio magistralis* by one of the best experts on Caesar, Luciano Canfora, that indirectly suggests how the performance of the play in Italy is always inseparable from thinking about Roman history and from establishing parallels between Rome and modern Italy (Teatro Franco Parenti 2014).

Furthermore, in her catalogue Colombo misses to note Barraco's and Manna's previous adaptation of *Julius Caesar* from a year before, entitled *Ventitré – Twentythree* – alluding to the number of wounds Caesar supposedly suffered (Massai 2013, 95). *Ventitré* comprised only the first three acts of the play and it ended with Caesar's (again the chair) assassination by red chalk. The assassination creates empathy for Caesar as it is followed by an actress in a white dress that evokes a wedding dress, sitting on a door behind the chair, with her make up ruined by tears and her trembling voice repeating Caesar's lines from the scene in random order (E-Theatre 2013, 1:08). This interpretation of

the play indicates an underlying empathy for Caesar. That one can empathize with Caesar is shown in a review of a scholar and theater critic Lo Gatto, who writes that by looking at Caesar's assassination staged in this way, "the spectators end up getting their hands dirty with their own independent knowledge of the facts to the point that, when we have to deal with the responsibility and legacy of that act, we should all feel guilty" (Lo Gatto 2012).

What is more, in the advertisement for the play Caesar was compared explicitly to Jesus Christ, making Caesar not only the victim, but the martyr: "Stabbed to purify the unclean society, washing with his own blood the stains of his time. Like Christ, but starting from an opposite position, he acts as a lightning rod for the infamies around him, absorbs the crime on himself, makes his body the crime, gives himself as the Shroud looking in the face the assassins, one by one, not so much at the executing hands but the representatives of the powers that condemned Rome, the Empire and that lifestyle" (Redazione Teatro e critica 2013).

Even after 2012 *Julius Caesar* was frequently performed in Italian theaters. In 2014 Romeo Castelluci produced *Giulio Cesare. Pezzi Staccati*, based on his celebrated production from 1997. The production in 'historical' costumes toured Italy and Europe in the next years, with the last performances in 2019. In 2016 Marcello Cava created *Viaggio con Giulio Cesare* – a trip with Julius Caesar – around the symbolic topoi in Rome. Although it was performed at

the historical sites, the majority of the actors wore contemporary clothing. It was restaged again in 2018. In 2017 Andrea De Rosa staged *Giulio Cesare. Uccidere il tiranno* – *To Kill a Tyrant* – for Teatro Bellini in Naples. The production, in contemporary costumes with an emphasis on the military aspect, was restaged again in 2019. By looking at the title one can understand what kind of evaluation of Caesar the production offers. In 2018 William Zola staged a lowbrow version of the play in 'historical' costumes in Pescara.

Finally, in 2019 Daniele Salvo proposed a new version of the play he already staged in 2007 and in 2012 at the Silvano Toti Globe Theatre in Rome. It was a time of a political crisis in Italy when (far) right-wing political forces have been strengthening and taking more and more space in the public discourse. Just before the marketing campaign for the production has started to intensify, in the summer of 2019, Matteo Salvini, the secretary of the nationalist party *La Lega* and the vice president of the Italian government at the time, asked the Italian people to grant him “unlimited powers”, supposedly to get the country back on track. He used a phrase that Benito Mussolini pronounced in his famous first speech as the President of the Italian government in 1922 (La Redazione de L'Espresso 2019). Daniele Salvo, then, in the beginning of the press release talked not only about the idea that Fascism in Italy was coming back, but also about the idea that “it actually never left”. He cites the aforementioned Salvini's and Mussolini's phrase, and writes that the signs of “Fascism

coming back in Italian society” have been present for “at least thirty years” (Salvo 2019). On the other hand, Salvo sees the conspirators as “idealists [who] want to suppress injustice and abuse of power. But they will prove to be vulnerable, fragile, devoid of any political skill, too naive” (Salvo 2019). “The costumes”, as he points out, “refer to a fascist era [and] suggest the idea of a latent, irrepressible Fascism the Italian people” (*ibid.*).

1.1. Case Study I

We can see how similarly to Eustis and Melrose (Mihanovic 2020), Italian directors have tried so many times in the last 100 years to problematize the idea and symptoms of dictatorship and radical politics by staging Shakespeare's play and presenting Caesar as a tyrant. However, in the same period there are stagings of the play that celebrate Caesar and perhaps even depict him in a manner that can evoke that of the Fascist regime, or at least appear to do so. What is more, none of the aforementioned producers and directors can boast of a letter of support written to them by a president of the European Parliament (Iacomoni 2019e), by seven golden medals awarded by different presidents of Italy (Rossetti 2015), let alone an idea that they would ever be investigated by the Secret Service, as I was told by one of the protagonists of my first case study (PL1VIG_01). That is the case of *Gruppo Storico Romano*, an association of historical reenactment from Rome that, since 17 years ago, every year on the anniversary of the Ides of March 44 BC organizes a reenactment of Caesar's assassination at the

archeological site of *Area sacra di Largo di Torre Argentina*, where Caesar is widely believed to have been murdered. After the reenactment the performers commemorate Caesar by bestowing a laurel wreath next to the archeological site (Clemente 2014c) or at his statue in *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (Angelini 2010, xvii), which is a tradition established by Benito Mussolini. "Every year on the Ides of March you will take care to adorn with flowers the statue of the founder of the Empire" - with these words, as is shown in a Fascist newsreel from Istituto Luce from 15 March 1934, he instructed the Italian people to commemorate the anniversary of Caesar's assassination (Istituto Luce Cinecittà 2012b).

What is more, GSR is even more famous for their 'historical' procession on the occasion of the celebration of the *Birthday of Rome* that they organize every year in April, which is another festivity established in the 20th century by the Fascist Regime (Melotti 2014, 2015). In fact, in 2020, on the twentieth anniversary of their organization of this celebration, the *Birthday of Rome* is going to be dedicated to Julius Caesar (Bello 2020). This of course if what seems to be an epidemic of COVID-19 or Corona Virus doesn't stop the reenactors from organizing it, as it seems to be the case for this year's Ides of March. "Corona virus saves Julius Caesar", wrote the president of GSR, Sergio Iacomoni, in a press release only several days before the Ides and thus postponed the event (Iacomoni 2020c).

The question, then, is who are these people that produce such a controversial commemoration of Caesar. According to the president of GSR, “the members [...] come from different professional areas, including workmen, shopkeepers, craftsmen, engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, managers, students, retirees, employees of the law enforcement agencies and the military” (Iacomoni 2019d). This shows that the performers are not actors at all. As an Italian TV journalist mentioned in a reportage in 2009, “medical doctors, employees of the municipality, employees of the Ministry of Defence, lawyers, bankers, lovers of history and ancient Rome” are members of the association (as cited in Nastace 2009, 01:09). An even earlier newspaper article, one from 2007, mentioned “bankers, military men, managers, politicians [and] ordinary people” among membership of GSR (Sansonetti 2007). And to all these lists one must add a decorated army general and an air force general that I met during my field work. This shows that there is a high social profile among their membership and it reminds of Giancristofaro's critique of reenactments in *Abruzzo*, another Italian region where participants of historical reenactments are selected according to their “socio-political and economic prestige” (Giancristofaro 2017, 283).

One can see that the phenomenon of the reenactment of the Ides of March comprises complex and important layers that do not exist in traditional stagings of Caesar's murder in theaters or in famous Hollywood films. This all makes it an

emblematic case study that needs to be thoroughly analyzed.

1.2. Case Study II

Secondly, the aforementioned film *Caesar Must Die* by the Taviani brothers, that possibly refers to Silvio Berlusconi as Julius Caesar (Bassi 2016, 184), is a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's play staged by Fabio Cavalli in the high-security section of the Roman prison Rebibbia. Even if lately prison theater and "prison Shakespeare" as phenomena are not rare (Montorfano 2012, 18), high-security prison doesn't seem to be a usual place for staging of a murder, even a theatrical one, and it even less seems to be an appropriate place for Julius Caesar, now "killed" by the hands of "major Mafia figures, drug dealers, murderers, violent criminals" (Mane 2013). These prison inmates, who speak different Italian dialects very different from Shakespeare's English, seem as if the Ides of March were not some distant, unknown historical event for them, let alone a theatrical one. While working on the film, prisoners thought not only about the historical event, but also about the Ides of March of their own lives, that they all have experienced in a similar way and that eventually brought them to prison. In this respect the Ides seem to be defined as the act of murder of a boss or a tyrant, and seem to be entirely at odds with the Ides of reenactors that celebrate Caesar.

By using prisoners' personal stories, the directors' and prisoners' take on the historical event is not only controversial, but also very subjective. They engage with the historical event in terms of their own understanding of criminality and of the political situation in late-Republican Rome and in present day Italy. Alongside this complex relationship of the film, its directors and protagonists with the historical event, there comes also the moral ambiguity of the film. In its rather complex film text, it is not always clear if conspirators are presented as idealists and liberators or as corrupt criminals as the quote above suggests, perhaps in a way unlike the reenactment, where reenactors are more clear that Caesar is a hero who should not have been killed. In the film there isn't the same commitment to the idea that Caesar is a hero, not least in the title of the film. The directors and actors take for granted the assumption that Caesar was a tyrant, and Brutus a champion of freedom. They present Caesar mostly as a darker figure. However, they still use him to accentuate great Roman roots of their culture and identity (Bassi 2016, 195) and, most importantly, they address the issue whether his killing is justified or not. Making it a story about Brutus and his struggle with having to kill Caesar, contrary to reenactors' celebration of Caesar, the film asks the question whether it is right to kill a tyrant or anyone. This fits with actors being imprisoned for related crimes. Reenacting personal experiences through Shakespeare helps them address this question, and through this reenactment they realize that murder is not a solution.

Moreover, the film is very significant and complex in terms of its medium and temporality. In terms of its intermediality, it is a film about a theatrical performance, and in some sense an adaptation of Shakespeare. It's playing with cinema and theater in number of different ways. It's metatheatrical and metacinematic. It's metatheatrical because it shows the preparations for as well as the performance of Shakespeare's play. It literally shows the works on the setting the theater stage for the performance (Caesar Must Die 2013, 22:00). The film is also metacinematic in number of respects: in the ways in which it is seen as situating Tavianis' work in relation to the history of cinema and in terms of its breaking away from Shakespeare's script and the spatial confines of the prison-theater. The space in which *JC* is performed is only very briefly the stage of the prison-theater, but mostly it is the prison cells, corridors, court-yards and other facilities within the high-security prison wing. Caesar's assassination is not performed on the stage of the prison theater but in a small, squalid and shabby prison courtyard making the assassination of Caesar look like a prison event, a murder of a prisoner and not of the most powerful man in the world of his time.

It's naturalistic, neorealist feature film that comprises short sequences of documentary footage of the theatrical performance of the play and fictitious footage of prisoners' everyday lives and rehearsals of the play that have an

“illusion-forming quality”: these scenes look like a documentary and, to paraphrase Rajewski, they trick the spectator to apply documentary-bound schemata (Rajewski 2005, 53, 54, 57). But they are fiction. To reiterate, it is not a literary transposition of Shakespeare’s play, but an appropriation or as Rajewski terms it, an “intermedial reference” (Rajewski 2005, 54). One can see that this unconventional mixture of theater and cinema, very different from a traditional Shakespearean theatrical or cinematic staging, stands out even in its genre. This is not a historical film, but a docu-drama and a very peculiar one, because one realizes that the film is fictional only as it proceeds, not at the beginning when one sees the footage of rehearsals that seem to be documentary.

When it comes to film's temporal complexity, this refers to the fact that the film is set in the present, but is looking back at the historical event and the historical event framed in terms of Shakespeare's Renaissance play. That's three levels of temporality. It's the time of the film making which is brought to our attention, it's the time of Shakespeare and his Renaissance play, and there's the moment of origin of the actual Ides.

Besides the aforementioned challenging complexities, the film is chosen as a case study also because, similarly to the reenactment, it has different levels of engagement with the original Ides that are all interestingly challenging. The performance of the Ides that we see on the screen had a cathartic effect on the participants and it triggered life

changes for the protagonists. Although they were criminals, some of them became professional actors on release. Salvatore Striano even implied that he was saved by Shakespeare, whom he considers his patron saint. As he puts it: "Thanks to the Bard I was saved from Camorra," a notorious Italian criminal organization with operations worth in billions of dollars (Baudino 2016). On the same note, the film, through Caesar, raises concern about contemporary issues and the position of vulnerable minorities - prison inmates - within society. They are vulnerable because of the legal organization and living conditions within the Italian prison system.

Moreover, the place where the film is shot is important for other reasons. It is important that this prison, just like the reenactment, is located in Rome, where the Ides of March actually happened, and today the capital of Italy. And although like the reenactment the film has a significant international impact, it is still a product characterized by and expressing local and national identity and cultural code. Together with that comes the language, as prisoners, similarly to reenactors, do not perform their reenactment in Shakespeare's English. Both reenactors and prisoners do not consult Shakespeare's play in English. Instead, both consult Italian translations and adapt these to their needs: reenactors speak in locally accented Italian and local slang, and prisoners speak in their local dialects. Similarly to the historical reenactment, the language in the film is very important for personal identification of prisoners-actors with the historical personages.

Therefore, this unique example of life convicts reenacting the Ides in a high security prison, the worldwide public impact of the film and the winning of many important international awards make it an appropriate case study.

1.3. Case Study III

Following the success of *Caesar Must Die* at the International Film Festival in Berlin in 2012, Fabio Cavalli staged public rehearsals/readings of Shakespeare's play at the 350-seat theater of the prison Rebibbia. These public rehearsals were acclaimed by the critics that managed to get tickets to these rare performances (Garcea 2012; Grasso 2012; Di Bagno 2013; Di Brigida 2013; Brucoli 2013). The dichotomy between the myriad of critiques of the Tavianis' film and only a handful of those dedicated to Cavalli's theatrical staging reveals power relations between Italian cinema industry's giants like the Tavianis and their distributor Nanni Moretti on one side, and Cavalli's theatrical research centre La Ribalta Centro Studi Enrico Maria Salerno and a public prison on the other side. It also points out to the differences between the productions, the Tavianis' film being a product intended for the mass market, while Cavalli's staging is a more artistic and therapeutic endeavour intended for prisoners, their families, university students, school children, Roman theatrical audience and intellectuals who follow Rebibbia's theater.

However, the production includes some Shakespearean scenes different from those in the reenactment and the film,

as well as different but emblematic non-Shakespearean scenes, thus making Cavalli's production a new evaluation of the historical Caesar in Rome. Therefore, like the reenactment and the film and in contrast to most historical cases that deal with Caesar's assassination, Cavalli's adaptation takes the event down to the personal, individual, highly intimate and subjective, local level. Together with the reenactment and the film, this performance of the dictator's assassination seems to entail a sense of cultural heritage as a personal possession, heritage as therapy, heritage as shaping one's national, local, political, social and gender identities. Although very emblematic, these cases are very recent, and therefore have not been analyzed by scholars from this particular perspective yet. Therefore, studying this reenactment and analysing it comparatively in relation to the film *Caesar Must Die* and the theatrical adaptation in the prison provides a highly innovative and valuable insight into important facets of the reception of the Classical world today, and can tell us a lot about the role of the Roman past in contemporary society, very differently from the studies of traditional theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and the existing scholarship on its Hollywood adaptations. This kind of interdisciplinary study can provide us with an ethnography of the enactment and reception of this ancient event, and that is usually impossible or not attempted in the area of the Classical Reception Studies.

Cultural production in the digital age: interrelation of the case studies to the focus of research illustrated in the thesis title and the scope of the thesis

One may argue that an alternative title of the thesis could have been “Presentations of Caesar’s Assassination in Popular Culture”. However, this title would be much more generic and would demand that many heterogeneous case studies from popular culture be included in the thesis, those from earlier centuries, graphic novels that shows Caesar’s assassination, video games (Assassin’s Creed Origins), TV series (HBO Rome), or other theatrical plays that have made their way into the popular culture. Another alternative thesis title may have been “Presentation of the Assassination in the 21st Century”. However, that would ask for an analysis of dozens of incoherent cases from a wide range of media, not only in Italy and Rome but worldwide, and it would be impossible to gather them all around one coherent theoretical and methodological framework.

On the other hand, the last ten years or so may be described as “the time of Facebook” (Giancristofaro 2017) or “Facebook Era” (Hawkins 2011; Mattiello 2017). Already in October 2011, when the case studies of this thesis have been in their initial phases in a way, “Facebook’s user base has grown to include over 800 million people” (Hawkins 2011, 1). In the same year Tracy Hawkins proposed in her PhD thesis a new concept called “Facebook-Era Feminism” and claimed that “Facebook, and other social networking

sites, is having a profound impact on feminist activism” (Hawkins 2011, iii). More than on feminist activism, Facebook has definitely had a profound impact on daily life in general. In different measure it also had an impact on case studies from this thesis as well as on the protagonists of these cases.

What is more, this period can be called Facebook Era also when it comes to Shakespeare performances in particular, and the respective scholarship. On that note I point to Geoffrey Way who in 2011 analyzed a performance of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* from 2010 “that experimented with the social network site Facebook to allow their audience the ability to access and participate in the rehearsal process that led up to four live stage performances [...] Later that spring, the Royal Shakespeare Company began a five-week performance of *Romeo and Juliet* entitled *Such Tweet Sorrow* that was performed entirely via Twitter. Six actors and actresses tweeted the performance over five weeks” (Way 2011, 401). What is more, in *Shakespeare and Social Media* O’Neill traces the first scholarly analyses of Shakespeare’s presence on YouTube to 2008, another platform connected to the case studies from this thesis and to Facebook (O’Neill 2015, 277).

The thesis takes its title after the book from 2017 “*Le tradizioni al tempo di Facebook*” – the traditions in the era of Facebook – by Italian cultural anthropologist Lia Giancristofaro who studied historical reenactments in the Italian region Abruzzo (Giancristofaro 2017). In her book

Giancristofaro recognized Facebook as “new tool for expressing identities and cultures” (Giancristofaro 2017, 25) and in that way a valuable source for ethnographic and discourse analysis of historical reenactments. It is a place where the cultural and social value of the case studies is manifested and realized. It enables the reenactors and prisoners to connect with their audiences, e.g. other reenactment associations that together make a lively local, national and international community, other (ex) prisoners. If there was no Facebook, these communities would not exist in the way they do, they would be small, local peculiarities.

The title of Giancristofaro’s book is particularly telling when one takes into account the fact that in her book she included the research of the historical reenactments in the Abruzzo region from 2005 (so the time before Facebook!) until 2016 and that she grew up in the culture she was studying. Therefore, in the book she is performing a sort of auto-ethnography and her insight is remarkably in-depth, also because she has access to all the platforms connected, digital and non-, thus shedding new light on the title of her book and on the importance of Facebook (Giancristofaro 2017, 24; 2018, 9). As she points out, “the world of the web and other forms of mass communication has been used as a source of evidence to read the ways in which certain symbolic affiliations are structured. In fact, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp) make visible and accessible the opinions and emotions that previously remained hidden” (Giancristofaro 2017, 25).

This implies that Facebook is a source of para-texts indispensable for the analysis of the phenomena in question, and that is definitely true for the case studies analyzed in this thesis. Social networks, more particularly, Facebook is a platform where the protagonists of the case studies publicize their activities, share the related content and both acquire and showcase a kind of social and cultural capital based on the case studies. The reenactment, the Tavianis' film and the prison theater have in different ways a virtual/social media dimension and they serve to the protagonists to develop their agenda connected to the case studies. Therefore, around the case studies and similar cases, different kinds of communities are created. In example, the reenactors share and comment the photographs and videos from the reenactment of the Ides of March and other reenactments, while the protagonists of the film and prison-theatre address the issues that concern life in prison. So these are the communities created around similar interestes. For instance, there is a very active public Facebook group entitled *Gruppo Storico Romano* with more than 6,000 members and an homonymous Facebook page followed by almost 12,000 persons, both with content that demonstrates what the Ides mean for GSR and their audience.

This kind of importance of social media has been recognized in Shakespeare Studies by Kate Rumbold in 2010. She showed that "the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Shakespeare's Globe, the Shakespeare Birthplace

Trust, and the British Library have developed Web sites to promote their Shakespeare-based work. Their sites seek to fulfill their mission of bringing Shakespeare to a global audience; they also serve as ‘paratexts’ in which they articulate the value of what they do” (Rumbold 2010, 314). Just like Rumbold, I am more focused on the importance of Facebook for the protagonists than for the audiences. This is something that also Giancristofaro recognizes as a characteristic of the use of Facebook and other social media by historical reenactors: they use them to communicate among themselves, not necessarily to let the public speak to them (Giancristofaro 2018, 9).

Furthermore, Su analyzes “Global Shakespeares and the Digital Turn” and writes that the goal of Shakespeare online platforms is that they be accessible to scholars, researchers as tools for analysis mainly new, under-represented voices in Shakespeare practices (Su 2014, 4). Even if this was not the intended aim of the reenactors’ and (ex) prisoners’ Facebook use, it is one of its results. While talking about online archive of performances of marginal, new, ethnic Shakespeare’s works, Su reports that “digital video performances, as Huang points out, ‘can form new relationships with the local and global, contemporary and even ancient histories of which they are a part’” (as cited in Su 2014, 4).

More particularly, in 2018 the video of the performance of the reenactment of Ides of March was shared on the mayor of Rome's official Facebook page (Raggi 2018a). Almost

127,000 users viewed the video and almost 2,400 persons reacted to the video of the reenactment on the official Facebook page of the Municipality of Rome (Roma Capitale 2018c). What is more, the mayor attended GSR's reenactment of the Birthday of Rome in 2018, and in a Facebook post she indirectly suggested that it was a celebration organized by the municipality. After people noticed and criticized this, the post was deleted, but it was caught and criticized in the media later on (La Redazione de La Postilla 2018). So one can see that Facebook does play an important role in this respect.

However, the Facebook page of the city's administration where they publicize their work on daily level and that addresses predominantly the citizens of Rome in the end attracts predominantly their citizens, and not random tourists from abroad. So in that sense, even if it is a global social network, Facebook aspect of the reenactment in this particular case seems to be geographically limited. This is true to some extent also to the prison film and the play. The protagonists write exclusively in Italian and they address specific issues of the Italian prison system.

Furthermore, as Iversen and Smith note, "social media can be actively used as both a means for and a model of communication and interaction emphasizing engagement and dialogue" (Iversen and Smith 2012, 129). Therefore, while noting an online presence of the key actors of the case studies of the thesis, the thesis investigates the role of social media with regard to their activities. In addition,

Liew seems to follow the same stream when he writes that “if there is one word that highlights the particular quality of social media, it would probably be 'participation'. Unlike the mass media before it, social media is fundamentally designed as a participative medium” (Liew 2014). On the said note he adds that “cultural theorist Jenkins (2006) observes that with the emergence of Web 2.0, a paradigm shift has occurred in the way media content is produced where audiences are empowered to participate in the culture... Of all the opportunities made possible by social media, perhaps the most advantageous to CHIs is indeed, the ability to foster participant engagement between an institution and its users and communities of interests” (Liew 2014). So in that sense the digital turn is also a “public turn” or a “democratic turn” (Barker 2013, 2) because prisoners and reenactors get their say about Roman history, Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, and perhaps most importantly, about themselves. Jenkins is the scholar that popularizes globally the term “participatory culture” (Jenkins 2006, 3). In his view, it “contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands. Not all participants are created equal. Corporations – and even individuals within corporate media – still exert greater power than any individual consumer or even the aggregate of consumers. And some consumers have greater abilities to participate in

this emerging culture than others” (Jenkins 2006, 3). However, the reenactors are not so open-minded and inviting when somebody criticizes them, thus negating the participatory aspect the above scholars advocate.

So the research is informed by these approaches and it views and analyzes the case studies in the Facebook era. Here it is important to discern that even if we are talking about the wider context of cultural production in the digital age, we are not dealing with “digital historical objects” (Cameron 2007, 68), concept promoted in the seminal book *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage*, edited by Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine and published in 2007 by MIT Press. We are also not dealing with “digital art” (Graham 2007, 93), another concept from the same volume, even if the Taviani’s film was made using digital tools, and it was actually their first film made by using exclusively new technologies. What the thesis is dealing with in part is digital data or the analysis of digital data from social media, mainly Facebook and YouTube, that creates paratexts indispensable for decyphering the prison theater film and the reenactment. Therefore, I understand Facebook and YouTube as “only a supplement, a natural extension of reception which have already been taking place in the previous eras” (Dominas 2014b, 109). In that sense, the thesis is informed by the research of Konrad Dominas who analyzes “antiquity in social media: the case of the ‘FILMWEB’ portal and its users” (Dominas 2014a, 21). He focuses on “comments of the users of the Filmweb site – Poland’s largest social networking site dedicated to the

cinema – about the most popular Hollywood productions referring to the antiquity” (Dominas 2014a, 24). The thesis also strives to analyze both “the post reach (the amount of people who viewed individual posts) and post engagement (the amount of people who interacted with them)” (Mahony, Spiliopoulou, Routsis, Kamposiori 2017, 292). On that note, the Tavianis’ film as a commercial product cannot be directly live streamed via social media like the reenactment so it cannot use Facebook in the same way. However, a social network that is important in the context of analysis of the online reception of this film is Internet Movie Database (IMDb), where more than 6,000 registered users in different ways reacted to the film. What is more, “although the inmates of the Rebibbia prison had been staging performances under the direction of Fabio Cavalli since 2003, it was only through a journalist friend that Paolo and Vittorio Taviani learned about the initiative in the first place” (Lovascio 2018). This shows that even if we’re talking about cinema and theater, prison is a closed community. However, even in this particular example social media, especially Facebook, end up playing a particular role that will be shown in the thesis. Even if Facebook seems more important for reenactors than for prisoners, even in the latter case studies Facebook is a source of para-texts necessary for a comprehensive analysis, and is a place where ex-prisoners realize their social and cultural capital, perhaps even more than the reenactors. For both these groups, Facebook is important when looking at the case studies as it gives another aspect

to looking at them as examples of *history from below*, but also an instrument that gives voice to the performers, and their *seat at the table* of public discourse.

Cultural policies in the context of Italy which situate the practices in question

With regards to Italian cultural policies that concern historical reenactments it must be said that the *Codice dello spettacolo* that gives a framework for regulation of historical reenactments in Italy has been passed only in 2017 (Gazzetta ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana 2017), almost 15 years after the reenactment of the Ides of March was first performed in Rome. Even the proposal of the aforementioned law was made only in late 2016 (Camera dei deputati 2016). Additionally, the decree “containing the resolution to allocate contributions from the ‘Fund for Historical Re-enactment’” was published only in late June 2019, so one can see how the system is slow and irregular when it comes to historical reenactments (MiBACT 2019). The first proposal of a similar decree happened in 2013, “Provisions for the promotion, support and valorisation of costume parades, re-enactments and historical games”, but it didn’t succeed (Fanelli 2017, 183).

The existing regulation is only very recent and it shows that in the recent past there was an even wider gap in regulating and funding the practice of historical reenactments in Italy. For instance, Giancristofaro points to

regional and local cultural policies in Abruzzo that predict funds for historical reenactments. In fact, “historical reenactments are supported by substantial public funding and progressively institutionalized as “cultural” in function of a hypothetical tourist attraction and entertainment of the area” (Giancristofaro 2018, 12). The rich Tuscany region established “Committee for the Valorisation of Associations and Events of Historical Re-enactment and Reconstruction” only in 2012 (Fanelli 2017, 181). On the other hand, this was not the case in Rome. In 2016 there was still a wide gap in regulation of the historical reenactments in Italy that resulted in an attempt by the reenactors themselves to sit down together and try to think of something at the *Stati generali della rievocazione storica* – The General State of Historical Reenactment - that emphasized the lack of a “legal recognition and financial support of the reenactments on the national level” (Fanelli 2017, 182). At the event Gianmarino Colnago, the mayor of Aicurzio, told the story of accidentally stumbling upon the headquarters of GSR and falling in love with their activities (Fanelli 2017, 185). On the same occasion, Andrea Buccolini of GSR warned of the problem of fake centurions that ambush tourists at the Colosseum (Fanelli 2017, 189), and that are known to make them pay even 50€ for a photograph. The Municipality has been fighting these activities, supposedly related even to organized crime, but they were not able to ban them permanently. Their activities gave a bad image also to GSR because not all the times people knew who was who. This shows how deep the legal lacuna has been when

it comes to the world of reenactment in Rome and in Italy. GSR had been promoting the idea of organizing associations of Roman reenactment into a proper Chamber, but different associations were not able to reconcile different interests among themselves, so this didn't happen. At the same time, other associations of Roman reenactment in Rome have been complaining of a special treatment of GSR by local politicians that also resulted in funding predominantly their reenactments (Longo 2012).

Even in 2019 there has been a problem. The reenactors from GSR have made an effective PR campaign and exercised political pressure on the Municipality of Rome because they didn't allocate any funds to their reenactment of the Birthday of Rome (Redazione Roma.it 2019). The attitude of the Municipality was that they cannot fund a private event particularly because of a lack of structured cultural policy that would regulate the criteria for the selection of (private) events according to which they could then be funded. So only until very recently, the reenactors have been agents of cultural policy, not objects. They have been active participants that put pressure on the government to do something about them and help them. In fact, very often the reenactors emphasize that they don't earn any money from reenactments and that they auto-finance themselves. However, the thesis will mention that reenactors have a significant source of income and that their business model does not depend on public cultural policies. In addition, their relationship with various public bodies at different

level is complex and seemingly unclear, and this is something that is analyzed in the thesis.

When it comes to policies that concern the film industry, European Commission recently published a document that contains an overview of all film funding in EU states, according to which in Italy “at national level, the main fund operating in the country is the Ministry for Cultural Heritage Activities – General Directorate for Film” (European Audiovisual Observatory 2019, 374). The captions at the end of the Tavianis’ film confirm that “the initiative has been realized and patronage of” the aforementioned body (Caesar Must Die 2013, 01:10:55). As the description in the European Commission’s document states, “the main legal framework for the public film and audiovisual funding in Italy is set by the Law of 14 November 2016 No. 220 - Discipline of Cinema and the Audiovisual (hereinafter the “Film Law”), effective from January 1, 2017” (European Audiovisual Observatory 2019, 375).

The captions in the film also mention “a contribution by the Region Lazio – Regional Directorate for Culture, Arts and Sports, the Municipality of Rome - Department of Cultural Policy and Historic Centre, and the Lazio Region Guarantor of Prisoner Rights” (ibid.). The law that regulates regional funds is “Interventi regionali per lo sviluppo del cinema e dell'audiovisivo (1)”, a regional law from 2012 that supports the local cinema (Consiglio Regione Lazio 2012).

The captions finally state that the “film was realized also in accordance with the regulations [...] of the tax credit”, meaning that certain sponsors were able to get tax deduction for allocating funds for the film (Cesare Deve Morire 2013, 01:10:55). When it comes to the film in the context of European cinema in the digital era, in the period from 2010 to 2015 Italy was one of “the five majory EU countries (that) received two-thirds of the aid” through EU MEDIA calls (Crusafon 2015, 88). In this particular framework the film was in 2012 funded with 25,000€ in total for its distribution in 14 EU countries (Media Films Database n.d.).

However, in his analysis of the Tavianis’ film, Hartley wrote that “a part of it feel like a low budget chapter of the *Godfather* franchise” (Hartley 2016b, 78). The film was made with a low budget indeed. The Tavianis actually complained about this. When the Minister of Culture Ornaghi congratulated the Tavianis on their success at the Berlin Film Festival and stated that in that period the government was “trying to give a new image of Italy, and the film helped them”, the Tavainis complained to the Minister about the lack of funding of their film and the lack of funding of cinema industry in Italy in general (Morgoglione 2012). Even if she thanked the Ministry, the Region Lazio, the Municipality of Rome and Rai cinema “for their contribution”, the producer of the film Grazia Volpi emphasized that it was “a rather small one” (Fratarcangeli 2012).

What is more, after its success in Berlin, the film was lauded as an “Italian victory”, but the distributor of the film Nanni Moretti emphasized that the Tavianis turned to so many producers before him, but nobody wanted to support and fund the film, so it was not the victory of the Italian cinema industry and system, but a victory of the Tavianis themselves (Morgoglione 2012). At the same time, it was the victory of the prisoners too. As Fabio Cavalli emphasized in different interview, many famous film and theater directors, intellectuals and artists have seen the plays at Rebibbia and have proposed different ideas, but only the Tavianis actually stayed and did something for them (Canessa 2012). Even the producer of the film, Grazia Volpi, emphasized that it was very difficult for them to find a distributor and only until several months before the film’s success, nobody wanted the film (Fratarcangeli 2012). She added that “in an Italy where comedy is the boss it is increasingly difficult to offer films of this genre, but [they] hope[d] that international recognition will help the promotion and diffusion of a certain type of Italian cinema” (ibid.).

At the same time, the Tavianis emphasized that “there was no money to shoot the film in a traditional way so [they] shot digitally with two cameras. It turned out to be a double-edged sword, because on the one hand it allowed [them] to shoot a lot, in absolute freedom and to repeat over and over again, on the other hand [they] found themselves in the editing room with a huge amount of

material to select which lengthened the post-production time” (Fratarcangeli 2012).

The thesis in the context of Shakespeare Studies: ‘author - politics - public’

Shakespeare’s history plays, and more particularly his *Roman* works, constitute a large and important part of his entire opus. Lovascio, who wrote extensively on Shakespeare’s Roman works, points out that Shakespeare’s Rome seems to have attracted attention by many scholars, especially in the last century: “T.J.B. Spencer and J. Leeds Barroll in the 1950s; Maurice Charney and Derek Traversi in the 1960s; J.L. Simmons, Paul A. Cantor, Michael Platt, George K. Hunter, John Wilders and David C. Green in the 1970s; Robert S. Miola, Paul N. Siegel, Alexander Leggatt and Vivian Thomas in the 1980s; Charles and Michelle Martindale, Charles Wells, Geoffrey Miles and Coppélia Kahn in the 1990s” (Lovascio 2019, 313). In fact, Lovascio points out that even more scholars seem to have studied Shakespeare’s representations of Rome in the 21st century (ibid., 313). In 2018, I myself have taken part in a thought-provoking *Shakespeare’s Rome International Summer School* in Rome, established and organized by some of the greatest names in the field, Maria Del Sapio Garbero and Maddalenna Pennacchia.

What is more, Lovascio notes that “Shakespeare’s interest in *romanitas* spanned his entire career. References to and

reworkings of Roman history, literature and culture are disseminated throughout his canon, which hosts [...] *Titus Andronicus* (1584–94), *Lucrece* (1594), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–07), *Coriolanus* (1607–09) and *Cymbeline* (1609–11) [...] even *Troilus and Cresida* (1601–03)” (Lovascio 2019, 311). In these works Rome is used to present different, sometimes conflicting “philosophical stances, ranging from Stoicism to Platonism to Epicureanism; different forms of government, ranging from monarchy to republic to empire; different forms of political constitution, ranging from oligarchy to democracy to tyranny; but also of different ways to wield power, different rhetorical styles, different conceptions of time and space, different ways to see and seek death, and especially different ways to see Rome, fellow Romans and the world” (Lovascio 2019, 312). However, Lovascio suggests that it is precisely the political aspect of Shakespeare’s Roman plays the one that made them recurring. In fact, he writes that “such a growing concern with all things Roman in Shakespeare studies is possibly at least partly dependent on the delicate political events and changes that the United Kingdom, the USA and Europe have been going through over the past few years – it is still unclear at the moment of writing under what terms the UK will leave the European Union” (Lovascio 2019, 313). And we all know how that ended.

Andrew Hartley, who edited a seminal critical reader of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, emphasized how prominent a role this play had in England of Shakespeare’s time: “it is

difficult to overestimate the importance of the historical person of Julius Caesar in Elizabethan English culture. Latin was still the language of statecraft and education, and anyone with any schooling at all – including the son of a Stratford glove-maker – would have been exposed not only to writings about Caesar, but to writing by Caesar himself, whose *Gallic Wars* were considered models of Latin prose style” (Hartley 2016a, 3). In fact, as he emphasizes, “for seventeenth-century England there could be fewer more contentious subjects than the reach of royal power and the authority of the people to remove any king or queen believed to have abused their position... Ideas of lawful regicide had been percolating for much of the sixteenth century, particularly in the secret discourse of those repressed, banished or executed in the name of religion” (Hartley 2016b, 52).

Andrew Hadfield writes that “the over-riding political issue around 1600 was the question of sovereignty and the legitimacy of the monarch” (Hadfield 2003, 1). In that sense one must read Hartley’s comparison of Julius Caesar and the Queen Elizabeth that shows how similar these two historical personages were: she was “a woman in the almost exclusively male world of national and international politics, a matter which was, for some, insufferable, despite her attempts to instil a manner of worship in her subjects by adopting, for instance, the iconic associations of the most Catholic of images, the Virgin Mary, in her various self-fashionings as goddess and Virgin Queen. She could be, like Caesar, capricious, dictatorial and ruthless, and the

fact that she was good at it did not necessarily make her as popular as the official record would have us believe. In the light of all of the above, it is easy to see why Shakespeare's play [*Julius Caesar*, of course] had built-in audience appeal when it first appeared and was, far from being the mouldy piece of ancient history it can sometimes seem today, a play on a subject which was both familiar and exciting, deeply rooted in the culture of the day, but also urgent. It spoke in particularly potent ways to ideas which were already circulating in the period, ideas about the limits of monarchical power and when – if at all – people could rise up and remove a head of state by violence" (Hartley 2016a, 5-6).

As Hartley focuses on the image of Elizabeth in her time, Lovascio focuses on the image of Caesar in Elizabethan England. He points out that not only Shakespeare, but also other English "dramatists foregrounded a few traits in Caesar that were felt as particularly abhorrent by Englishmen—namely, his ingratitude toward his country and his premeditation of crimes against it, together with the blatant exasperation of his destructiveness, hypocrisy, cynicism, ambition, and feminizing intemperance. In the process, the figure of Caesar acquired the potential to be construed as a sort of early modern English national nemesis, as the supreme embodiment of evil, as the country's antonomastic enemy" (Lovascio 2017, 249).

Lovascio points out that "the dynamic [of the play] mirrors the turmoil of the last decade of the Elizabethan reign. In

particular, it seems to allude to the manouvres of the subversive faction led by Elizabeth's favourite-turned-rebel The Earl of Essex, not only in Shakespeare's decision to provide 'the conspirators with an Essex-like youthfulness' and Cassius with a choleric disposition, but especially in the fact that the 'new generation of Brutus, Cassius, and Antony struggle to appropriate the triumph' of the old Caesar, just 'as the Essex circle attempted to do' with the ageing Elizabeth" (Lovascio 2016, 89-90). More particularly, as Andrew Hadfield argues, "it is precisely the fact that the Roman citizens seem to have 'no stake in their collective destiny' that may have 'struck the English audience at the Globe'" (as cited in Lovascio 2016, 90). Therefore, "setting the dramas in ancient Rome allowed playwrights of the early modern age to escape more easily the political censorship exercised by the Master of the Revels" (Lovascio 2020).

Furthermore, Hadfield analyzes the Essex issue more in-depth and writes that "it would have been extremely problematic for Shakespeare to have produced a play which justified the assassination of Caesar in 1599, given the tense political circumstances accompanying the impending death of Elizabeth and the imminent change of dynasty, as well as the increasingly overt political sympathies of the Essex circle with whom Shakespeare was associated [...] *Julius Caesar* [then] is best read in terms of the fears prevalent in late Elizabethan society. Caesar's death leads only to worse anarchy and tyranny, a message explicit in Plutarch's *Lives*. Elizabeth was extremely

unpopular among many in the literate, articulate and politically frustrated sections of the public, those who felt they had a right to have regarded with considerable foreboding. In fact, Shakespeare's representation of the isolated conspirators and the disasters they inflict on Rome can be seen as a warning, that attempts to transform the political destiny of a nation without a proper plan or a wider base of support, are doomed" (Hadfield 2003, 148).

In other words, Lovascio emphasizes "the preeminent influence the Roman past exerted on the early modern English cultural and political scene. Conceived as a supreme ideal of military, political, artistic, and cultural excellence toward which the present invariably moved in an unflagging striving for emulation, ancient Rome permeated the Elizabethan and Jacobean social imagination" (Lovascio 2017, 219-220). He adds that, "in early modern English drama, Gaius Julius Caesar effectively summed up the essence of *romanitas* both in his greatness and idiosyncratic complexity. By emphasizing some elements and themes, and by modifying or even inventing others in the received historical narratives, early modern English playwrights ended up creating (perhaps largely unconsciously) an alternative historical Rome whose personalities and events better answered the demands of this newborn English national identity. In turn, this newly-created Roman past might have even become an imaginative space in which a sense of national unity could be strengthened by way of contrast" (Lovascio 2017, 220).

Therefore, one can safely agree with Peter Lake who concludes that history and Roman plays, “set in remote periods and locales, eschewed English history altogether but used the very remoteness of their temporal and geographical settings to apply the history they were staging to contemporary events and concerns with a sustained intensity and an increasingly savage disillusion” (Lake 2017, 595).

2. Theoretical framework, Concepts and Literature review

The research project originates as a study in Cultural Heritage. Since case studies are from three different fields – historical reenactment, film, prison theatre – they ask for a interdisciplinary theoretical framework that can integrate these different enactments of Caesar's assassination on stage(s) and on screen under a coherent theoretical umbrella. It is a high-risk research because it involves developing and creating intersections between a wide range of theoretical approaches in order best to interrogate the contemporary case studies of individuals who enact Caesar's murder. The project is also complex because it involves different kinds of analysis of literary, ethnographic (itself both direct and indirect) and digital data, and it includes comparison across media (historical reenactment, prison theatre, film, digital) and across cultural communities (Roman reenactors, prisoners). Primarily this is a study of a historical reenactment with

other case studies that help illuminate the reception of Caesar in Rome today.

2.1. *Reenactment Theory*

The project starts as a study of the reenactment, a relatively new phenomenon. The fact that the *Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field* with its introductory text “What is reenactment studies?” has been published only in 2020 shows how recent the discipline is (Agnew, Lamb, Toman 2020)². However, reenactment has been studied in fields like Consumer Research and Marketing Studies (Belk and Costa 1998), Anglophone Studies (Hall 1994; Agnew 2004, 2007, 2010; Agnew and Lamb 2009), Public History (Ferretti 2016), Cultural Anthropology (Handler 1987; Snow 1993; Turner 1989; Turner 1990; Mugnaini 2013; Dei 2016a, 2016b; Dei and Di Pasquale 2017; Giancristofaro 2017), Performance and

² The titles of the entries in the Handbook are useful indicators that point out what characterizes the phenomenon today. Those are: “Archive, Art, Authenticity, Battle, Body and embodiment, Conjecture, Corroboration, Dark tourism, Documentary, Emotion, Evidence, Experience, Experimental Archeology, Expertise and amateurism, Forensic architecture, Gaming, Gender, Gesture, Hajj, Heritage, Historically informed performance, History of the field, Indigeneity, Living History, Martyrdom, Material Culture, Mediality, Memory and commemoration, Mimesis, Mitzvah and memorialization, Narrative, Nostalgia, Objects, Pageant, Performance and performativity, Pilgrimage, Play, Practices of authenticity, Practices of reenactment, Production of historical meaning, Realism, Representation, Ritual, Role-Play, Sublime, Suffering, Trauma” (Agnew, Lamb, Toman 2020)

Theater Studies (Schneider 1997, 2011, 2014, Magelssen 2007, Johnson 2015, 2016), Archeology (Koch and Samida 2012, 2013a, 2013b, Samida 2012, 2014, 2015, Samida and Liburkina 2014; Rambuscheck 2016). Earlier studies of the phenomenon in what now has developed into a field originate from 2000s (Gapps 2002; McCalman and Pickering 2010; Magelssen and Justice-Malloy, 2011).

Furthermore, the first one to trace the origins of the phenomenon were not scholars of the reenactment, but of Roman history, who studied the reenactments in Rome (Coleman 1993). This shows that the phenomenon itself originates in Republican Rome. The first example is *Ludus Troiae*, “an equestrian game of young noble men in honor of the mythological origins of Rome, on the mythical-literary model of the fifth book of the Aeneid, which describes the funeral games in honor of Anchises” (Berto 2010a, 18). The second were the *Hippika Gymnasia*, “a military game between the faction of the Greeks and the Amazons” (*ibid.*). One of the first types of historical reenactments were also *naumachiae*, “shows on natural or artificial lakes, in which the gladiators or those condemned to death, reproduced naval battles of Roman history” (*ibid.*). The first *naumachia*, that between the 'Egyptians' and 'Phoenicians', is organized by Julius Caesar (*ibid.*), so in that sense one of the first historical reenactments is attributed to Julius Caesar.

But the question is what is historical reenactment in modern terms. In the twentieth century the concept was

first introduced by the philosopher of history Robin G. Collingwood in his seminal book *The Idea of History* that appeared in 1946. For Collingwood, reenactment was a strategy used by a historian who needed “to re-enact the past in [one’s] own mind” (as cited in Johnson 2016, 27) and together with all the data available to try to reconstruct a historical event as faithfully as possible. His work is greatly illuminated in the studies of William Dray (1995), and more recently of Peter Johnson (2013). Collingwood, however, was not the source that either scholars of the reenactment or the reenactors themselves have looked upon too much. The standard theoretical reference in this interdisciplinary field are the works of Vanessa Agnew, a professor of Anglophone Studies, particularly her ground-breaking article entitled “Introduction: What Is Reenactment?”, from a special number of the *Criticism* journal (2004). In that article Agnew writes that reenactment “spans diverse history-themed genres—from theatrical and ‘living history’ performances to museum exhibits, television, film, travelogues, and historiography” (Agnew 2004, 327). Later she expands the definition and includes also “technical reconstructions and ‘nostalgia’ toys (e.g. tin figures, dioramas and architectural models) to literature, film, photography, video games, [...] pageants, parades and, reenactment’s most ubiquitous instantiation, social and cyber groups devoted to historical performance” (Agnew 2007, 300). Along the same lines John Brewer writes that reenactment is “a term that seems to cover a multitude of signs and a myriad of forms – the Christian sacrament of

Communion, the activities of societies for creative anachronism, Shakespeare's history plays, movies about the Alamo, art forgeries, a lot of pornography, most scientific experiments" (Brewer 2010, 79). However, a much more recent definition of the phenomenon, from more than 10 years after Agnew's first definition, describes reenactment as "the (re)performance of historical events, people, cultures, or activities. A highly popular pastime, performance mode, and (in some respects) a form of public pedagogy, re-enactment is emerging in scholarship as a potentially productive, albeit often problematic, means of rousing interest in history" (Johnson 2016, 7). Marco Valenti distinguishes between a historical reenactment and a historical reconstruction. In his view, "the re-enactment is the act of staging documented events and episodes; the reconstruction, instead, aspires to be impeccable in the production of clothing or tools or weapons, in an attempt to behave and repeat ancient gestures and it is an activity that requires study and practice, hours and hours spent in the library to learn and 'in the field' to experiment" (Valenti 2017, 258). Truth be told, my experience during the field work has showed that in practice these terms get exchanged one for the other. In addition, building on Berto's categorization (2010a, 40) and the differentiation of reenactment "sectors" of *Gruppo Storico Romano* (GSR n.d.b), in the context of Roman reenactment I recognize reenactments of a) military (costumes, equipment, armament and military life; predominantly late-Republican and early imperial Roman legions, a little less often

praetorian cohorts, and legionaries from later centuries), b) religious rites, c) Roman Senate, d) female beauty, f) gladiators.

One important characteristic of the reenactment is that it “allow[s] participants to select their own past in reaction to a conflicted present” (Agnew 2004, 328), and this is going to be very important while analyzing the reenactment. Not rarely it includes great numbers of active performers. Agnew reports of “tens of thousands [of reenactors who] participated in the reenacted Battle of Gettysburg (1998)” (*ibid.*). I myself can testify to participating in a 'historical' procession on the occasion of the anniversary of *Natale di Roma* - the Birthday of Rome – where around 1500 'Roman' reenactors from all over the world have paraded around the symbolic topoi in Rome's city center under the piercing Roman sun on April 21st 2018.

Another important characteristic of the reenactment is “an insistence on 'authenticity' [that] grounds historical claims that might otherwise lack legitimacy” (*ibid.*, 331). This is going to be exemplified through several points in the reenactment, together with my own anecdotes from field work. As Agnew explains: “Reenactors decry sloppy costumes and what is perceived to be inauthentic behavior. They vie to create the appearance of historical fidelity and position themselves within a hierarchy of the genuine: whereas the “farb” is liable to wear hand-knitted chain mail and fight with a plastic sword, the hardcore reenactor will go to extreme measures to ensure that his uniform and

equipment conform to the requisite standards and that his body is sufficiently chastened" (ibid.). Reenactment is also useful object of a critical analysis as it "tells us more about the present self than the collective past" (ibid. 335). In that sense I will try to show why do we have the reenactment of Caesar's assassination in the way we do and not in some other way.

In another article from 2007, Agnew analyzed two German reality TV shows as examples of historical reenactments and argued that the reenactment is a product of "history's recent affective turn i.e. of historical representation characterized by conjectural interpretations of the past, the collapsing of temporalities and an emphasis on affect, individual experience and daily life rather than historical events, structures and processes. The affective turn signals a break with the kind of ethical and political responsibilities that adhered to some postwar historiography" (Agnew 2007, 299).

One of the biggest issues of the Reenactment Studies is why people do these things at all and this is perhaps the most difficult thing to find out. As Bernard emphasizes, "if you ask people too quickly about the sources of their wealth, you are likely to get incomplete data. If you ask too quickly about sexual liaisons, you may get thoroughly unreliable responses" (Bernard 2006, 368). The question why someone dresses up and pretends to be someone else is invasive as the aforementioned questions. Scholars mention motives for participating in the reenactments, such as: "interest for

history, desire to relive history, desire to share and communicate history, to acquire knowledge, to have fun and spend time, to meet people, desire to experiment, family reasons, the pleasure of dressing up, desire for role and identity change" (Samida 2014, 143). Samida lists other motives as well: "a) immediate experience; b) community experience/social togetherness, c) experience of nature/exoticism d) escapism/escape from the present; e) borderline experience; f) role change; g) fun and games as well as h) mediation of knowledge" (Samida 2014, 142). According to Rebecca Schneider, reenactors "core motivations [are] a desire for simpler times and defined gender roles" (as cited in Johnson 2016, 33). However the problems arise when a researcher offers pre-established responses to reenactors he or she interviews. In that way the reenactors can provide an answer he or she may think that would be appropriate, intelligent or that researcher would want to hear. This points out to the difficulty of studying reenactments in general. In this particular case, when one has some matching references to Fascism, the research gets even more complicated. On the other hand, Samida's research shows how heterogeneous the motivations of the reenactors are. Therefore, it is very difficult to try to force them under one strict theoretical framework or premise.

2.2. Classical Receptions Theory

The research is conducted also in the field of Classical Reception Studies. The 'problem' with the Classical

Reception Studies as a field which should offer tools for analysis of a Roman reenactment is that scholars of the Classics and Classical Receptions have not hitherto considered reenactments in their research, either because they were simply unaware of their existence, or because they deemed them unworthy of their scientific attention, as modes of engaging with the Classical past. It is true at the same time that Roman reenactment has appeared only in the last 25 years or so, and in the first years it definitely did not look as today, it was not a serious reenactment.

However, when it comes to the receptions of Julius Caesar in the 20th and 21st century in politics and in popular culture, on theatrical stage and on cinematic or TV screen, the field is dominated by the work of Maria Wyke. Already in 1997 Wyke has published a groundbreaking book entitled *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema, and History*. The book is important because it demonstrates how film industry can provide an “immediate, personal, and authentic experience of ancient Rome” (Wyke 1997, 20). Historical films and historical reenactments share “constant claims to truth, accuracy, and pedagogic value” so in that sense a study of the reenactment must be informed by the approach of the studies of Roman historical films (Wyke 1997, 20). They are also similar in a sense that both are “a discourse about the past as well as the present” (Wyke 1997, 38). This all is mirrored not only in the reenactment, but also in Taviani's film and Cavalli's theatrical staging. What is more, there is a similarity of the producers who want for their product the function of creating a “national

discourse" (Wyke 1997, 54), especially with regards to the Italian silent film of the first half of the twentieth century, before and during the Fascist era (Wyke 1997, 48).

When it comes to the demands of the production, historical reenactment is a purer and less contaminated medium than a film, especially in comparison to Hollywood films, because there is no such a strong pressure for profits. This is even more truthful to Cavalli's staging, and only to some extent to the film. So a Roman reenactment or a prison-theater staging will hardly have to fall into the category "pagan boy meets Christian girl" (Wyke 1997, 32) or "the highly exploitable conflicts of Romans and Christian" (Wyke 1997, 34). As Wyke notes, "since film needs a public, it addresses itself and appeals to a heterogeneous mass audience whose desires it must satisfy" (Wyke 1997, 55). However, "if filmmakers and their financial backers then seek to correspond to the beliefs and values of their audiences, films can be considered as reflections of the mentality of a nation. By means of this convenient critical shift from film to society, the historical film in particular can be viewed as a central component of the historical text that a society writes about itself, as a modern form of historiography that, if properly investigated, can disclose how a society conceives and exploits its past to construct its own present and future identities" (Ibid.). In that sense the reenactment mirrors the reenactors' and their audience's desired understanding of Caesar and his assassination.

Wyke's contribution was even more significant in later works. In "Sawdust Caesar" she deconstructed Mussolini's fascination with ancient Rome and Julius Caesar (1999, 169). She noted how Mussolini established the tradition of commemorating Caesar on the Ides of March by bestowing flowers upon his statue in the *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (170). She showed how in his time Mussolini was compared to Caesar (171). She particularly addressed the reception of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in Fascist Italy:

"Numerous translations and commentaries were published but only one production staged. Shakespeare's Julius Caesar was dangerous in its apparent depiction of overwhelming demands for power, the possibility of subversion, and the mortality of a dictator. In critical introductions to the text, ambiguities could be elided, Caesar exalted, Brutus denigrated, and Antony allocated non sinister intent. On stage, however, the presence of the bloodied corpse was unsettling. [Marisa] Sestito argues further that the only fascist production of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, staged by Nando Tamberlani in 1935, attempted to neutralize the subversive potential of the text. Spectacular lights shine onto three arches in the Basilica di Massenzio until Caesar is assassinated under the central arch surrounded by darkness. Tyrannicide here dims the bright splendour of Rome, and Shakespeare's play becomes the tragedy not of Brutus but of Caesar" (Wyke 1999, 173).

What is more, in an article from 2004 she again discusses the attitude of Mussolini towards Caesar, and writes how the famous Mankiewicz's film *Julius Caesar* from 1953 uses

these correlations and fascist revival of ancient Rome (2004, 61). The article is also important because she exemplifies how to perform an analysis of a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's play using methods proposed by David Bordwell.

Finally, her work on the reception of both Julius Caesar and *Julius Caesar* is even more visible in books she published. In 2006 she edited a fundamental volume on the topic, entitled *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, in which renowned scholars wrote about receptions of Caesar in most diverse media and throughout history, since his own days to the 21st century in the context of his "literary characterization, in the city of Rome, in the context of Statecraft and Nationalism, in theater, in warfare and revolutions" (Wyke 2006c, vi-vii). Only a year later she wrote and published a complementary *Caesar: A Life in Western Culture*, dealing with Caesar's life and with contemporary receptions of different events from his biography (2007). Finally, in 2012 she published *Caesar in the USA*, where she showed how important Julius Caesar and ancient Rome were throughout history of the USA (2012), offering thus an invaluable corpus indispensable for the analyses of performances studied in this thesis.

2.3. Adaptation Theory

Third discipline that accounts for the analysis of both the cinematic and theatrical adaptation of Shakespeare's play is Adaptation Studies. Where the methodologies from Classical Reception Studies stop, there come those from Adaptation Studies, a field that builds on concepts from Literary, Film and Cinema Studies. The adaptation theory as such was starting to get shape with "the first full-length study of film adaptation by George Bluestone in 1957, [...] slowly followed by monographs in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Cartmell 2012, 7). From this, "'Shakespeare on Film' has emerged as a major academic discipline" (Ibid.). However, even if the theory of Adaptation is recent, the practice of adaptation isn't. As Linda Hutcheon shows: "the Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything – and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants* were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again" (Hutcheon 2006, xi). Cartmell shows how today almost anything can be seen as an adaptation: "videogames, theme park rides, Web sites, graphic novels, song covers, operas, musicals, ballets, and radio and stage plays", let alone a historical reenactment or a prison film (Cartmell 2012, xiv). This corresponds to Murray's description of the field, in which adaptation as an object and a context is "a freewheeling cultural process: flagrantly transgressing cultural and media hierarchies, wilfully cross-cultural, and more weblike than straightforwardly linear in its creative dynamic" (Murray 2012, 2).

As Deborah Cartmell notes, it is a discipline that is “the art form of democracy” (Cartmell 2012, 1), and in that sense it allows history enthusiasts and amateur actors such as historical reenactors and prison inmates to use Shakespeare to discuss *Julius Caesar* and their own lives during the process of adaptation. Thomas Leitch writes that in the beginning the field was concerned with “medium-specificity”, after which it evolved into a study of “intertextuality”(2017, 3). The study of all the case studies in the thesis is informed by both approaches. In that sense I will analyze all the case studies in their relation with the source text, I will analyze characteristics of the media employed, and I will analyze the discourse of the performances in their socio-political context of production and distribution. The analyses avoid falling into the trap of being a slave of the fidelity to the literary text (Leitch 2017, 7) and thinking of the performances in terms of how “faithfully [they] represent well-known art masterpieces” (Cartmell 2012, 2). My starting point is “rejecting the idea of film adaptation [or historical reenactment or prison theatre for that matter] as a necessarily inferior imitation of literary fiction” (Murray 2012, 8). In fact, as Murray points out, “wilful infidelity [i]s in fact the very point: adaptations interrogate the political and ideological underpinnings of their source texts, translating works across cultural, gender, racial and sexual boundaries to secure cultural space for marginalised discourses”(Murray 2012, 10). Therefore, in a certain way I try to disregard “as an implicit standard of value for” the reenactment, the film or the theatrical

staging (Leitch 2007, 3), and I rather look why the source text was used in that particular way (Cartmell 2012, 2).

Furthermore, Cartmell points out that adaptation “brings literature to the masses but it also brings the masses to literature” (Cartmell 2012, 3). This is especially true when it comes to Cavalli's staging of Shakespeare's play in the prison theater, and its cinematic transposal to the screen. Even if Roman history and literature are much more accessible to reenactors, starting with the fact that they are not incarcerated, it is a form of one's own *doing pasts* (Brædder, Esmark, Kruse, Nielsen, Warring 2017) or practicing or doing history, as the title of Wilner's, Koch's and Samida's volume states: *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur* (2016). What is more, even if the studies in the field employ “textual analysis as governing methodology” (Murray 2012, 7), Adaptation Studies implement methods of analysis from Film Studies: “mise en scène, editing, acting styles, lighting, sound and costume”, that are useful for the analysis of all the case studies in this thesis (Murray 2012, 4).

The reenactment of the Ides of March, amply based on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, did not catch the attention of scholars from the field of Adaptation or Shakespeare Studies, even if non-traditional areas of Shakespearean adaptation or appropriation have been more and more popular. Therefore, I study the three case studies in this particular theoretical framework, while agreeing with Murray that “neither macro-oriented political economy nor

textual- and audience-focussed cultural studies was predisposed to examine the how and why of adaptation from the perspective of the authors, agents, publishers, editors, book prize committees, screenwriters, directors and producers who actually make adaptations happen” (Murray 2012, 11).

3. Research questions and aims

With the aim of analysing comprehensively emblematic enactments of the Ides of March 44 BC in the 21st century, I pose the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of contemporary productions of Ides of March?

RQ2: Who are producers and users of these productions? What are profiles, motivations, goals and purposes of the producers/performers? Why are they interested in Ides of March?

RQ3: What impact do these productions have on the performers?

RQ4: What meanings do these productions create in their socio-political context of production and distribution?

RQ5: How do audiences consume and react to these productions?

The project investigates what these products tell us about the past, in which way do they tell it, why do they tell it (in the way they do), and consequently, what kind of relationship with the past and with the present they stimulate for their performers and the public.

In order to address the aforementioned questions I employ several methodologies.

4. Methodologies

4.1. *Adaptation Studies: Literary Analysis*

From Adaptation and Shakespeare Studies I employ literary analysis. I closely look into the relationship of the performance text of the reenactment, the film and the theatrical performance on one side and the source text, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on the other side. I analyze how the source or the "adapted text" (Hutcheon 2006, xiii) is adapted and appropriated for reenactors' and prisoners' purposes. I consider the reenactment and the film to be more an appropriation than an adaptation of Shakespeare. I opt for the first term as, according to Linda Hutcheon, it is more political than the latter, and as Julie Sanders argues, it is more distant from the original text (as cited in Desmet and Iyengar 2015, 11, 12, 16). In Jean Marsden's words: "Associated with abduction, adoption and theft, appropriation's central tenet is the desire for possession. It comprehends both the commandeering of the desired object and the process of making this object one's own, controlling it by possessing it. Appropriation is neither dispassionate nor disinterested; it has connotations of usurpation, of seizure for one's own uses" (as cited in Desmet and Iyengar 2015, 13). In addition, one of the "important functions of Shakespearean appropriation", according to Desmet and Iyengar, is cultural authority (Desmet and Iyengar 2019). In that sense I think about the case studies as appropriations because, as Cartelli notes, "appropriations generally work for the interests of the

appropriator and against the interests of the work or author being appropriated”(as cited in Desmet and Iyengar 2015, 16). Still, I would attribute to the case studies the characteristic of “feeding off the original's fame or prestige”, a characteristic that Cartelli attributes to adaptations (as cited in Desmet and Iyengar 2015, 16).

So in the next chapters I analyse the case studies as literary appropriations: I start from a “traditional compare-and-contrast method” (Kidnie 2009, 4), and analyze how performers change and use the original play, with particular attention to the similarities and differences between Shakespeare's text and the performance text in the sense that I look for “cuts, additions and substitution” in lines, characters, scenes and acts (Tronch Pérez n.d). Like Tronch Pérez, I ask “what interpretation(s) of the play does the performance version offer through these changes” (Tronch Pérez n.d.). Here I address the question of the genre (reenactment versus film versus theatrical play), and the language and style the performers use, and I analyse how similar or different the language of the reenactors and prisoners is from the language of Shakespeare in terms of Italian translations of the play.

The reenactors are not clear about which translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* they are using. Therefore, I am analyzing their script in relation to eight different Italian translations of the play, those most canonical, recent and popular, by Mario Praz (1993), Agostino Lombardo

(2000), Goffredo Raponi (2000), Flavio Giacomantonio (2011), Sergio Perosa (2015), Alessandro Serpieri (2016). I take into account also two popular culture products and I compare the reenactment to Italian version of Joseph Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (Mankiewicz 1953; as cited in Mancino 2015) as well as Vittorio Gassman's registration of Mark Antony's oration (Gassman 1959). Gassman is one of the most famous Italian actors of the 20th century and his performance of Antony's oration is well known and distributed in Italy (Michele 2012). I also look into reenactors translation in relation to the Folger Edition's English version of the play (Folger Digital Texts n.d.). However, it is important to note that the analysis does not intend to fall in the outdated category of the "fidelity discourse [that] prioritizes the analysis of works in relation to an imagined, static Shakespearean text or to an idealized Platonic performance" (Desmet and Iyengar 2019).

On the other hand, for the purpose of making the Taviani's film, Cavalli translated *JC* from English, from the In-Folio version from 1623. The script of the film is not in verse, contrary to the script of the later Cavalli's theatrical staging, that in part was written in verse (Montorfano 2012, 34). While translating, Cavalli took in consideration ten or so previous Italian translations that he found "too academic" (Montorfano 2012, 31, 32). He prepared the core of the text and then collaborated with prisoners on their translations of these into dialects.

In this sense also I analyze how reenactors and prisoners characterize Caesar and the conspirators in comparison to Shakespeare. The analysis looks at how the play, in Margaret J. Kidnie's words, "for all that it carries the rhetorical and ideological force of an enduring stability, [it] is not an object at all, but rather a dynamic process that evolves over time in response to the needs and sensibilities of its users" (Kidnie 2009, 2). In this occasion, the users are Roman reenactors. The 'problem' with the historical reenactment is that it is not a widely known mode in the field of Shakespearean adaptation, let alone in the area of traditional productions. As Kidnie notes, "the challenge to adaptation studies thus remains: when speaking specifically of drama, what constitutes adaptation as distinct from production? How does this problem of identity inform the politics of adaptation, and the critical tools one brings to its analysis?" (Kidnie 2009, 7). This refers also to prison-Shakespeare and the corresponding film to some extent. Similarly to Morgann's "critical method [I] rely upon careful scrutiny of the [performance] text" (as cited in Marsden 1995, 141). Looking at their choices of scenes and lines that characters say is "pivotal to our understanding of [reenactors'] ideologies, politics and culture, as it simultaneously constructs and reflects positions taken" by them (Krebs 2014, 1).

The issue of the tools necessary for the analysis of the reenactment point out also to the fact that, besides Shakespeare, the reenactment is in part based on historical

sources. Therefore, I also address the question of the authorship, and from the fields of Roman history, Classics and Classical Receptions I employ historical analysis. This is not unusual, as research in the field of Reenactment Studies is often characterized by a “historiographical approach” (Johnson 2016, 53). Therefore, I look at how the events in question have been written about in the historical sources and I compare it with the narrative of the reenactment.

4.2. Methods from Cultural Anthropology

Methods from Cultural Anthropology are specific to the analysis of the historical reenactment. However, while analyzing the film, I perform a sort of a mediated ethnography, in the sense there is a myriad of interviews and media appearances that serves as a data for an ethnographic analysis. Other methods, like participant-observation are impossible in the context of the prison theater for obvious reasons. To safeguard the identity of the reenactors, the identities of those reenactors that have participated in my ethnographic study are not mentioned. In other places I only mention the names coming from publicly available data, such as interviews and content from the media.

From Cultural Anthropology I employ semi-structured in-depth interviews with reenactors, informal interviews, qualitative surveys, participant observation and unobtrusive observation for data collection (Bernard 2006). From the same discipline I employ open and thematic

coding, ethnography and thick description for data analysis (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011). Data obtained using these methodologies are anonymized, and anonymity of the reenactors is preserved in this thesis.

4.2.1. Sampling strategy

Similarly to Giancristofaro, who also studied reenactments in Italy, in this research the target of my survey and “the interviewees were selected on the basis of their involvement in the activities” (Giancristofaro 2017, 27). In the same way I searched for interviews of key stakeholders of both the film and the theatrical performance in the prison theater. Sampling strategy, that is the choosing of informants for my interviews was focused on both key informants and specialized informants (Bernard 2006, 196). As Bernard writes, “key informants are people who know a lot about their culture and are, for reasons of their own, willing to share all their knowledge with you” (Bernard 2006, 196). In accordance with Bernard, those were the people with whom I was able to establish closer relationship than with others and that provided valuable research data. In different ways the reenactors and prisoners were already cultivating practices of writing or speaking publicly about their reenacting experiences so there was already plenty of valuable data to analyze. While researching the reenactment of the Ides during my different and intensive field work sessions I had the chance to interview also reenactors from different parts of Italy, Croatia, France, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and

the United States of America. These 'Roman' reenactors were very diverse, ranging for instance, from one who held an MA degree in Classical Archeology from Harvard, or a European *vice-champion* in lifting weights, to a longtime manager of an international company that staffs around 10,000 employees and earns around 400 million USD annually. These reenactors all provided valuable information for contrasting and comparing with my primary data.

What is more, valuable data was also provided by specialized informants, mostly because they were not only very attentive to my research but also because they signaled aspects of their activities that they felt I needed to include. In other words, my strategy was to spend time and talk as much as possible with key stakeholders of the reenactment of the Ides of March and of GSR, those who perform and shape the reenactment. Therefore, my interviews, even informal ones, were almost never random or “totally unstructured” (Bernard 2006, 210). Even my unstructured informal conversations were following a “general script and a list of topics” (Bernard 2006, 210). Obviously the script and the list has been evolving during different stages of research. I found informal interviewing particularly important too, and I used it during my “ethnographic fieldwork to build greater rapport and to uncover new topics of interest that might have been overlooked” (Bernard 2006, 210).

4. 2. 2. *Interviews*

Although one of the reenactors in an informal conversation mentioned that he thought it important to include anagraphic data in my questionnaires and interviews (year of birth, gender, marital status, level of education, type and status of employment), reenactors were expectedly not too enthusiastic about answering all these questions, especially those that were divorced, unemployed or held lower-paid jobs. As Bernard emphasizes, “if you ask people too quickly about the sources of their wealth, you are likely to get incomplete data. If you ask too quickly about sexual liaisons, you may get thoroughly unreliable responses. Hanging out builds trust, or rapport, and trust results in ordinary conversation and ordinary behavior in your presence” (Bernard 2006, 368). Almost exactly like this, in informal conversations some of these information came up. Also, a lot of these information were already available online, as I showed in the introduction of the thesis.

As Wolcott suggested, I wanted to “keep interviews focused on a few big issues” (as cited in Bernard 2006, 224), That is why I was more interested to learn when, why and how key stakeholders I talked to joined the association, which department of the association they belonged to, what their family and friends thought about their activities, what they liked the most about being a member of the association, and what was the most important thing they learned in the association. When it comes to the reenactment of the Ides of March specifically, I asked what

they thought about the historical personage they reenacted, how they felt during the reenactment. I also asked what it means for them to reenact an ancient Roman today, which values ancient Rome represents for them and if they thought these values were lost in society today. I asked where from their motivation and passion for ancient Rome originated, if there was an ancient Roman person or event that inspired them particularly, how important was Roman history for their personal identity. I asked if they lived the reenactment in any spiritual way (if yes, in what way) and what they liked the most in their reenactments. Finally, I always asked if there were any other comments, questions and doubts, any suggestions or something they wanted to share with me, something they considered important and I didn't ask. These interview questions were used also in a survey I distributed among the reenactors on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides of March in 2018. I used the a slightly more unstructured and informal form of interviewing at times when I felt possible to touch very briefly upon the political aspect of the reenactment.

With regards to probing techniques, that is, “stimulating a respondent to produce more information, without injecting yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data”, I used different strategies (Bernard 2006, 217). I used “The Silent Probe”, that stands for “just remaining quiet and waiting for an informant to continue” with sometimes nodding and “mumbling uh-huh” (Bernard 2006, 218). I used “The Echo Probe”, that is,

“simply repeating the last thing someone has said, and asking them to continue” (Bernard 2006, 218). I used “The Uh-huh Probe”, “by just making affirmative comments”, and the self-explaining “The Tell-Me-More Probe” (Bernard 2006, 219). Finally, at times I was “Probing by Leading”, that is, directly and precisely asking about a piece of information I was interested in (Bernard 2006, 220).

However, there were some red areas and questions that reenactors did not want to talk about. For instance, when I asked about a passionate and longtime reenactor of the Ides of March I was told only that he was not part of the association anymore and that they “put a cross on it”. To paraphrase, it meant that *he is dead to them*. The respondent even made a sign of the cross with his finger that was followed by a dead silence from other reenactors at the venue. It was a clear sign that this topic was a taboo (field notes 2019). A similar thing happened a couple of times when I tried to talk to them about politics. Already in informal conversations some of them showed signs of being threatened in a sense by a possibility of being 'accused' of latent connections or correlations with fascism or radical politics, so this topic was a taboo too (field notes 2018, 2019). Luckily, there is a multitude of data available from other sources that filled this particular gap.

4. 2. 3. Surveys

The above questions, together with those for the anagraphic data constituted a survey that I administered

among the reenactors on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides of March in 2018. This was done after several previous unsuccessful attempts. Encouraged by studies by other reenactment scholars in Italy, Germany and in the United Kingdom (as cited in Berto 2010a, 7; Samida 2012, 213, 217; 2014, 141; Samida and Liburkina 2014, 192; Rambuscheck 2016, 193-194; Giancristofaro 2017, 101), I tried to do an online version of the survey. I posted it in a very active Facebook group of the association, I also sent the link to different key actors within the association via email on various occasions, and on various occasions I have asked them to encourage their members to fill in the survey. All of this failed and only a couple of reenactors filled it in. Informed by previous scholarship in the field (van Dijk, Smith, Weiler 2012; Fiorani, Minuta, Maffi, Moretti, 2014) in 2018 I also designed a corresponding questionnaire for the audience that was published on the official Facebook page of the event and I asked the reenactors to promote it, but the effort was not fruitful. Together with the reenactors we were also trying to find ways to physically administer questionnaires among the audience, but it was logistically impossible. It would have been unrealistic to expect that people would fill in the questionnaires instead of watching the reenactment and there would be no time to do that after the third scene because of the 'historical' procession. There was also the issue of multiple interviewers that would need to be independent, well trained and interested to volunteer in the study. Also, I would not have been able to participate in the

reenactment had I been administering the survey among the audience. So the only thing I was able to do was to administer the survey among the reenactors dressed in costume an hour before the start of the performance and later after the end of the performance after all of us got back to our everyday clothes. However, me being one of them and exposing myself to the public by reenacting along their side despite my lack of training and my language barrier definitely helped them accept me as one of them. It encouraged them to fill in the survey and to enthusiastically talk to me about their activities. As Bernard points out, “participant observation reduces the problem of reactivity—of people changing their behavior when they know that they are being studied” (Bernard 2006, 354)

4. 2. 4. Participant observation

I agree with Bernard's statement that “participant observation fieldwork is the foundation of cultural anthropology” and it is the foundation of this part of my research as well (Bernard 2006, 342). As he states, “it opens thing up and makes it possible to collect all kinds of data” (Bernard 2006, 354). A very important characteristic of my two participant observations on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides of March in 2018 and in 2019, as well as on the occasion of the Birthday of Rome in 2018, is that I was invited by the reenactors themselves to participate as one of them in the reenactments, and it wasn't me who even brought this idea to the table. It was them who, after learning what my research was about,

actually insisted that I participate in the reenactments together with them (field notes 2018, personal correspondence 2019).

I thought that having the perspective of a participant – observer in the reenactment, or a 'co-performer witness' as Dwight Conquergood frames it, may have resulted in findings I would not have been able to get otherwise (as cited in Korol-Evans 2011, 159). My assumption proved to be true. If I had not participated in the event as “one of them” I sincerely doubt that a large number of people would have ever accepted to fill in the survey, especially with the questions I asked, and they would not have wanted to talk to me about their experiences and motivation for reenacting. Also, as Korol-Evans's writes, “by using this form of research, I am avoiding the trap of privilege, in which academia focuses on study from a distance, looking down upon its subjects from the outside. Instead [of remaining safely in my ivory tower], I performed with the people with whom I worked, creating an intimate, personal level of knoweldge otherwise unattainable” (Korol-Evans 2011, 159; brackets by the author). Problems she addresses are reported by different ethnographers who didn't particpate in reenactments they studied (as cited in Tyson 2011, 63; Johnson 2016, 35). Still, I felt fairly awkward and uncomfortable on the stage also because I do not have any aspirations in this field and I retained that the audience had deserved a performance as professional as possible. I was somewhat passive in a sense

that I focused on observing reenactors' behavior and communication before, during and after the reenactment. When possible, I also avoided cameras and being photographed. However, the importance of participant observation in research of any historical reenactment has been well summarized by Katherine Johnson in her PhD thesis: as "Ahmed suggests 'if the researcher's own body is positioned in the research then the interaction can be made more explicit and the 'facts' enriched by being set in a more detailed context' (2004, 296). Examining the ethnographer's presence and experience as participant-researcher also enables us to address the influence of our being there, softening the objectifying gaze of the traditional ethnographer by including one's self in the field of view (Spry, 2006). Adopting the approach advocated by these theorists, my ethnographies explore 'the bodily experience of the fieldworker as research process and source of knowledge' (Okely 2007, 66)" (as cited in Johnson 2016, 58). So even if I felt uncomfortable about being constantly observed and photographed, very importantly for my research, I was very aware that this was happening.

4. 2. 5. Positionality

One important issue at stake here is that of positionality. The first time when I met the reenactors I was given away as a foreigner by my Croatian accent, or Slavic as they called it. Together with an occasional *lapsus linguae* it was somewhat a challenge in the first stages of my field research. I was an outsider in the sense that I was not an

Italian citizen and a native speaker, but I was coming from Croatia. Even if Croatia is Italy's first neighbour and the two countries share a long and lively border in the Adriatic sea, I noticed how unfamiliar it was for some reenactors and how exotic and unknown this country sounded for some of them (field notes 2018). Also, in the beginnings of my field work, some of the reenactors raised the issue of the complex political relationship the two countries had in the past, especially with regards to the WWII, and they felt better about me when they understood that I was not a nationalist or a fan of the former Yugoslavian Communist regime.

Still, at some instances I got an impression that I was looked down on by some reenactors because I was coming from what some of them must have considered poor Eastern Europe. At the same time I was reassured by others that I was all right because the territory of today's Croatia has once been a Roman province so, as I was told, I was a Roman citizen too (fieldnotes 2018)! The fact that I spoke Italian definitely helped, also because I have seen only a handful of them speak some English. On the same note, in the first year of my field work I was not fluent in Italian, and there was a certain language barrier between us in the sense that I was not able to integrate myself completely within the group and the reenactment is performed in Italian. On that note, in 2018 I was not invited to participate in any rehearsals of the reenactment although I checked if there were any opportunities of this kind. I was told it was unnecessary because I would have a guide, and I had one

(field notes 2018). I also mitigated any risks by working hard and with enthusiasm and this obstacle did not threaten the research in the end.

Another important factor in terms of my position was my age. Even if there were some reenactors in their 20s and 30s, the large majority of the reenactors from the Ides of March were middle aged or senior men, especially the 'senators', who were almost exclusively seniors, so in that sense, besides being of the same gender and race, I was not "one of them". In 2018 this was demonstrated by the fact that I wore a *toga candida* in contrast to other 'senators's *togis virilibus*. This point also to the power relations between us. As a longtime group comprising members from different walks of life and areas of expertise they may seem somewhat intimidating even to other groups of Roman reenactment, let alone the people from outside this world, like me. Therefore, I as a young researcher needed to demonstrate that I was capable of doing the research, and in a sense I was initiated in the community through discussions about Roman history during seemingly informal conversations, by sharing food and wine at the dinner table and talking about this and that, and by working hard and sweating under the pierce Roman sun along their side while setting up and dismantling the stage for their reenactments.

4.2.6. *Unobtrusive observation*

As an engrossing experience, participant observation was not able to provide all the data necessary for a comprehensive analysis of the reenactment. As Bernard emphasized in contrast to interviewing as a data collection strategy, “when you want to know what people *actually do*, however, there is no substitute for watching them or studying the physical traces their behavior leaves behind” (Bernard 2006,413). In fact, this is how my field work actually started. In 2017 I attended the performance of the reenactment as an unobtrusive observer and I made my first field notes there. Since I was in the audience as a researcher and not on the stage observing them as closely as possible, there was less of a possibility that they would perform in a particular way they may or may not expect I would appreciate (Bernard 2006, 413). Another extremely valuable tool for unobtrusive direct observation were video recordings of the performances from 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 that were available on YouTube and that I will constantly refer to in this chapter.

4. 2. 7. *Field work*

My field work consisted of going to Rome on various occasions to observe unobtrusively the performances, to participate in the reenactments, to talk informally and formally with reenactors that participate in the performance of the Ides of March and that are key stakeholders in the association. To immerse myself as much as possible in the world of Roman reenactment and to

collect valuable data, during my field work sessions I attended also other events organized by GSR, such as exhibitions, congresses, book presentations. I also attended other reenactments organized by GSR like those on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the Birthday of Rome in 2018: the religious rite *Pro salute et felicitate rei publicae* - a rite for the health and happiness of the Roman Republic, "the historical and legendary reenactment of the foundation of the city 'Tracciato del solco'" - the marking out of the border, the *Palilia* - another Roman religious rite connected to sheep-farming, *Adventus Hadriani* - the enthronement of the emperor Hadrian, *Commissio feriarum* - opening of the celebrations of the Birthday of Rome with the ceremony of the ascension of a fire and the blessing of the reenactors by *pontifex maximus* in *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, the 'historical procession' of the Birthday of Rome, gladiatorial combats, 'ancient' dances, the war of the Horatii and the Curiatii, "the historical reconstruction of the disappearance of the 9th legion and the construction of the Hadrian's wall", and one "equestrian event" (Chiodi 2018).

Furthermore, in 2018 I have helped set up the stage and the props for the performance of the Ides of March, and on the occasion of the aforementioned reenactments in the context of the Birthday of Rome in 2018 I have helped set up and dismantle Roman tents, security fence and other equipment before and after the events, where I bonded with reenactors while helping them. What is more, on several occasions I have visited their Historic-Didactic Museum of Roman

Legionary, situated at their headquarters, that has been awarded a silver medal by the President of Italy (Quartieri 2015). Finally, on several occasions during my field work I have attended group dinners at the headquarters of GSR where I immersed myself in their world as their guest and after some time, as one of them (to some extent).

4. 2. 8. Field notes

During daytime activities with the reenactors I was not able to write more than “jottings that Roger Sanjek calls scratch notes” (as cited in Bernard 2006, 389). I got the impression that writing longer notes during participant observation and informal interviews would have been considered rude and intruding. In this process I was aware of the challenge of both “‘join[ing] conversations in unfamiliar places’ and withdrawing to some more private place to write about these conversations and witnessed events” and I mitigated the issue by only writing short notes while on field and by writing substantially in the evening after the observation (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 19). I only took more detailed field notes on the spot when I got the explicit permission by the reenactors or when I checked that it would not jeopardize the authenticity of the experience, that is, they would not alter their behaviour in order to provide an image they may have thought I wanted them to project. I have kept notes during some interviews where I concluded that the interviewee would not have felt intimidated by my rigorous formality. My field notes were descriptive and analytic (Bernard 2006, 397, 398). While writing them, I was attentive of including “nonverbal cues

to local meanings such as eye gaze, gesture, and posture” when those seemed telling (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 2011, 13).

4. 2. 9. *Analyzing and coding strategies*

When analyzing interviews and data from surveys, I followed the same strategies as for the analysis of field notes. The first phases of the analysis of my field notes are very similar to what Bernard describes in the following paragraph:

“I think it’s best to start with the ocular scan method, or eyeballing. In this low-tech method, you quite literally lay out your notes in piles on the floor. You live with them, handle them, read them over and over again, tack bunches of them to a bulletin board, and eventually get a feel for what’s in them. This is followed by the interocular percussion test, in which patterns jump out and hit you between the eyes” (Bernard 2006, 406).

Since reenactors' subculture is embedded in the dominant mainstream culture in many ways, I would define its analysis as a mixture between “'narrating', (Richardson 1990; Richardson and St. Pierre 2005), and 'textualization', that is, referring to the generic processes whereby ethnography 'translates experience into text'” as Clifford and Marcus define it (as cited in Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 19). The strategies used in the first stages of this analytic process are well described under the terms *asides* and *commentaries* by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw:

“The most immediate forms of analytic writing are asides and commentaries, interpretive writings composed while the ethnographer is actively composing fieldnotes. Asides and commentaries consist of brief questions, ideas, or reactions the researcher writes into the body of the notes as he recalls and puts on paper the details of a specific observation or incident [...] Asides are brief, reflective bits of analytic writing that succinctly clarify, explain, interpret, or raise questions about some specific happening or process described in a fieldnote. The ethnographer dashes off asides in the midst of descriptive writing, taking a moment to react personally or theoretically to something she has just recounted on paper and then immediately turns back to the work of description”(Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 80).

“A commentary is a more elaborate reflection, either on some specific event or issue or on the day’s experiences and fieldnotes. Focused commentaries of the first sort are placed just after the fieldnote account of the event or issue in a separate paragraph set off with parentheses. A paragraph-long summary commentary of the second sort should conclude each set of fieldnotes, reflecting on and raising issues and questions about that day’s observations. Both types of commentaries involve a shift of attention from events in the field to outside audiences imagined as having an interest in something the fieldworker has observed and written up. Again, in contrast to descriptive fieldnotes, commentaries might explore problems of access or emotional reactions to events in the field, suggest ongoing probes into likely connections with other events, or offer tentative interpretations” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 80-81).

I implement the methods by following the strategies recommended by the authors:

"We suggest ways to begin the analysis of fieldnotes: close reading, open coding, and writing memos that formulate and clarify the ideas and insights that such coding produces. We then consider procedures that are helpful in carrying out more specific, fine-grained analyses: focused coding and writing integrative memos. While we discuss reading, coding, and memoing as discrete steps in analytically processing fieldnotes, we want to emphasize that the researcher is not rigidly confined to one procedure at a time or to undertaking them in any particular order. Rather, she moves from a general reading to a close coding to writing intensive analyses and then back again" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 173). "The ethnographer begins concentrated analysis and writing by reading his fieldnotes in a new manner, looking closely and systematically at what has been observed and recorded. In so doing, he treats the fieldnotes as a data set, reviewing, reexperiencing, and reexamining everything that has been written down, while self-consciously seeking to identify themes, patterns, and variations within this record"(Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 173-174).

The first phase in this process is open coding:

"Open coding begins with the ethnographer mentally asking questions of specific pieces of fieldnote data. In asking such questions, the ethnographer draws on a wide variety of resources, including direct experience of life and events in the setting; sensitivity toward the concerns and orientations of members;

memory of other specific incidents described elsewhere in one's notes; the leads and insights developed in in-process commentaries and memos; one's own prior experience and insights gained in other settings; and the concepts and orientation provided by one's profession or discipline. Nothing is out of bounds!" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 177).

Then follows focused coding:

"Having decided on core themes, and perhaps having sorted the fieldnotes accordingly, the ethnographer next turns to focused coding that is a finegrained, line-by-line analysis of selected notes. This involves building up and, in some cases, further elaborating analytically interesting themes, both by connecting data that initially may not have appeared to go together"(Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 191). Also, as Bernard points out, "no matter how you actually do inductive coding—whether you start with paper and highlighters or use a computer to paw through your texts; whether you use in vivo codes, or use numbers, or make up little mnemonics of your own; whether you have some big themes in mind to start or let all the themes emerge from your reading—by the time you identify the themes and refine them to the point where they can be applied to an entire corpus of texts, a lot of interpretive analysis has already been done. Miles and Huberman say simply: 'Coding is analysis'(1994:56)" (as cited in Bernard 2006, 495).

I complement this with Narrative and Performance Analysis. As Virginia Hymes puts it, "only through close work with many narratives by many narrators that you

develop an understanding of the narrative devices that people use in a particular language and the many ways they use those little devices. But all this depends on having texts—lots of them” (as cited in Bernard 2006, 476). This is where the above mentioned video recordings of the performances since 2010, interviews, media appearances and writings of the reenactors in this 10-year period become useful to understand the developments and changes in the reenactment over the span of 10 years. In other words, this method “according to Virginia Hymes, involves 'working back and forth between content and form, between organization at the level of the whole narrative and at the level of the details of lines within a single verse or even words within a line'. Gradually, an analysis emerges that reflects the analyst's understanding of the larger narrative tradition and of the particular narrator” (Bernard 2006, 476).

This type of analysis integrates two different ways of producing ethnography: first, an ethnography as Van Maanen sees it, “representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others” (as cited in Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 14). The second is an ethnography as a “thick description” (Johnson 2016, 58) or a “narrative tale” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 202). As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw point out, “such tales weave specific analyses of discrete pieces of fieldnote data into an overall story. This story is analytically thematized but often in relatively loose ways; it

is also fieldnote-centered, that is, constructed out of a series of thematically organized units of fieldnote excerpts and analytic commentary” (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011, 202).

4.3. Adaptation Studies 2: Analysis of the Film and the Theatrical Staging

Since the thesis engages with different kinds of cases and different media as it goes along, now that we've moved on to cinema, I am using the techniques and theory that belong to this medium. Only by looking at the film itself, by watching the film, one can see what the film does to Shakespeare and how it takes it off the stage, puts it into prison and merges it with the lives of the prisoners. In film theory approaches, the film is understood as a text where 'text' means the whole totality of the film, and that includes four key categories: mise-en-scene (everything that comes before the camera, including acting), camera work, editing and sound. Film is dominated by the visual aspect, but it is multi-medial, thus composed of images, words and sound, and each of these is going to be analysed. Language, in example, is very important in this film, as it was shown in the introduction to the chapter.

Instead of submitting to any “Grand Theory” and trying to force the film into its framework, in order to decypher the meanings behind the film and its presentation of the Ides of March and the ways the directors and actors engage with the historical narrative, in this chapter I employ close

analysis, a strategy that treats the film as a text made up of multiple, aforementioned components, as described by Aumont and Marie, Thompson, Bordwell and Carroll (as cited in Aumont, Marie 1988; Smith 1998; Thompson 2013). I perform a shot-by-shot analysis of the key moments in the film, particularly of the assassination scene and important scenes before and after the assassination. I do this while having in mind Colman's view that that "there is no singularly identified 'correct' film theoretical position", as well as Stam's take on the challenges of applying any exclusive film theory to a case analysis (Colman 2014, 14; Stam 2000). As Stam writes:

"I am shamelessly eclectic, synthetic, anthropophagic even. To paraphrase Godard, one should put whatever one likes in a book of film theory. If I am a partisan of anything it is of 'theoretical cubism': the deployment of multiple perspectives and grids. Each grid has its blind spots and insights; each needs the 'excess seeing' of the other grids. As a synaesthetic, multi-track medium which has generated an enormously variegated body of texts, the cinema virtually *requires* [emphasis original] multiple frameworks of understanding [...] I have learned from many theoretical schools, but none of them has a monopoly on the truth" (Stam 2000).

In order to understand the themes, motifs and morales of the film I look at the film text and perform narrative structure analysis. In other words, I do not look only at the script, but at the whole structure or the entirety of the film,

the totality of the mise-en-scene, camera work, sound and editing. I use this method to shed light on the relationship of the film with the actual historical event, the directors' and actors' views on Caesar's behavior and the conspirators' motifs, and to understand what kind of message the film directors appear to offer. I use the same analysis method to position the Ides and the post-assassination scenes in the context of Shakespeare's play and in the context of the film itself.

What is more, as the film is understood as a text, there are para-texts that enhance our understanding of it. Therefore, I look beyond the film text and I also focus on the para-texts that are closely related to the film: publicity materials, press reports, interviews and public appearances of the directors and actors. I do that in order to position the film in the broader context of Classical Reception and as an expression of a local Roman and Italian national cultural code and to review the place of the film in the whole Tavianis' opus. Here I employ a contextual, or rather, a semiotic analysis of the title of the film and the data gathered from the interviews and public appearances of the directors.

In order to provide an understanding of the impact of the film and the representation of the Ides of March on prisoners, I also perform a sort of ethnographic work. It is a kind of mediated ethnography because, as a substitute for interviewing the participants, I am looking at the multitude of already existing accounts of their experiences:

interviews, public appearances and main actors' autobiographies ('Brutus', 'Cassius', 'Caser'). This is a rare opportunity because ethnography is usually not possible at all in the field of Classical Reception Studies. On the other hand, it is among the most effective methods used in studies of "prison Shakespeare" or prison theatre, like in the works of James Thompson (1998), Amy Scott-Douglass (2007) or Jonathan Shailor (2011).

Furthermore, in order to understand the film as an expression of a local Roman and Italian national cultural code I also look beyond the film text and para-text, at the third category of the film, its context of production and distribution, which is broadly social and political. I contextualize the film in this cultural and social framework and elaborate its implications in order to show what it signifies to its audience in Italy.

All these qualitative analyses of the entirety of the film text, para-texts and the context of production and distribution of the film constitute together a semiotic analysis of the film. In this sense I also refer to the semiotic analysis of the official poster of the film done by Bassi (2016, 201). This sort of mixed analysis has been framed in the field of film theory with the works of the above mentioned film scholars, and has been employed in the field of Classical Reception Studies by Wyke, e.g. when looking at Mankiewicz's filmic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as visual publicity and encoding of the film's 'message' (Wyke 2004, 2012, 151-152).

To conclude, in order to parallel previous analysis of the reenactment and enrich understanding of it through this comparison, I will follow the dual structure of analysing the film in itself first and then a kind of ethnographic study of the para-texts, the comments of directors and actors about their experience of doing it. I will follow the same methods as in the previous chapter in order to compare the two cases: first looking at the relationship of the film with Shakespeare's play, not just from the point of the narrative structure, but also looking at the organizational and technical aspect, because I am looking at the outcome of their technical organization – camera angles, the way they bring in Cavalli as a character in the film, the way they present the film not only as a stage play from start to finish but also in between the rehearsals within the prison spaces, how they structure the rehearsals not as a documentary but as fiction, and the linguistic aspect of the film. These general strategies that they adopted are explanatory of the scene analyses and they are followed by the particular scene analyses. The ethnographic part comes in the last part of the chapter. Finally, throughout all the contexts of analysis I will address the gender issue as compared to the reenactment.

The analysis of the Cavalli's staging of the play on the stage of the prison theater will follow the same structure, while immediately looking for differences and similarities between all three case studies.

4.4. *Discourse Analysis*

Previously explained methods culminate in the third type of analysis used in this research, discourse analysis, already used in the study of historical reenactments (Seig 2008), in Museum Studies (Allen 2002) and in the field of Philosophy of History (Caroll 1990). Firstly, it is important to point out how *discourse* is understood in the framework of this research. Starting from Gee's view, I understand discourses as “ways with and integrations of words, deeds interactions, thoughts, feelings, objects, tools, times, and places that allow us [or reenactors and prisoners in this particular case] to enact and recognize different socially situated identities”(Gee 2011, 44). This, then, raises the issue of how one collects data for discourse analysis in this particular case. Besides implementing ethnographic and literary data collection strategies described in the previous sub-chapter and looking at the script of the reenactment, the film and the theatrical staging, I also look at other para-texts around these case studies, texts that reenactors provide through different “channels” (Coulthard 1985, 49): especially audio recordings played before the beginnings of the scenes during the performance, introductory speeches by the key stakeholders, official press releases and press conferences for the reenactment, blog posts, interviews and media appearances not only in the last 10 years from which I have acquired video recordings of the performances, but since the beginning of reenacting activities of GSR in 1994. In the same way I look at interviews and media appearances of the protagonists of the film and the

theatrical performance. I look at the autobiographies of the main actors: 'Caesar', 'Brutus' and 'Cassius'.

I understand this “text” in the way Alexandra Georgakopolou and Dionysis Goutsos term it, as a “communicative unit embedded in social and cultural practices, shaping and being shaped by them” (Georgakopolou and Goutsos 2004, ix). Therefore, the analyses are done on different revelatory video recordings available publicly on YouTube, but also on Facebook, that proved to be an important platform for manifestation and enacting of these social and cultural practices, particularly useful source for data acquisition and analysis. For instance, there is a very active public Facebook group entitled *Gruppo Storico Romano* with more than 6,000 members and the homonymous Facebook page followed by almost 12,000 persons, both with content that demonstrates what the Ides mean for GSR and their audience.

Facebook was important as place of dissemination of the reenactment also from a political perspective, as the Municipality of Rome has also been advertising both the reenactment of the Ides of March and the Birthday of Rome for years on their official web page and official social media accounts, during the terms of mayors Alemanno, Marino, Tronca, and the current mayor Raggi (Roma Capitale 2013a, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b; 2019c; Raggi 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; NotizieRoma 2018, 2019). What is more, in 2018 the video of the performance of the reenactment of Ides of March was shared on mayor

Raggi's official Facebook page (Raggi 2018a). Almost 127,000 thousands of users viewed the video and almost 2,400 persons reacted to the video of the reenactment on the official Facebook page of the Municipality of Rome (Roma Capitale 2018c). What is more, the mayor Raggi attended GSR's Birthday of Rome in 2018, and in a Facebook post she indirectly suggested that it was a celebration organized by the municipality. After people noticed and criticized this, the post was deleted, but it was caught and criticized in the media later on (La Redazione de La Postilla 2018).

Data for discourse analysis of the reenactment was acquired also at GSR's congresses, at their didactic booths during the reenactments, at the exhibitions, book presentations, but one can see the importance of social media and especially Facebook as “new tool for expressing identities and cultures” and in that way a valuable source for ethnographic and discourse analysis (Giancristofaro 2017, 25). This was emphasized by an Italian cultural anthropologist Lia Giancristofaro, who titled her book about historical reenactments “Le tradizioni al tempo di Facebook” – the traditions in the era of Facebook (Giancristofaro 2017). It is a place where the cultural value of the reenactment is manifested and realized. It enables the reenactors to connect with other reenactment associations that together make a lively international community. If there was no Facebook, these communities would not exist in the way they do, they would be small, local peculiarities.

I perform discourse analysis because, as Gee writes, it understands language as a tool that “allows us to be things. It allows us to take on different socially significant identities”(Gee 2011, 2) and this approach is particularly important in the study of historical reenactments. This approach demonstrates how language allows people to achieve a certain social status they want, so in that sense I implement Gee's point of view in which “language is always [understood as] 'political' in a deep sense” (Gee 2011, 7). For Gee, therefore, “all discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis, since all language is political and all language is part of the way we build and sustain our world, cultures, and institutions. So, then, too, all discourse analysis is 'practical' or 'applied,' since it uncovers the workings—for good or ill—of this world building” (Gee 2011, 10). Here I use Gee's definition of *politics*, as contestation over 'the distribution of social goods' [where] all language use involves perspectives on the distribution of social goods (Gee 2011, 69). Just as “historical tract requires the choice of an ideological perspective”, as Haydn White argues (as cited in Carroll 1990, 134), the reenactment of the Ides of March provides a particular ideological perspective whose discourse needs to be analyzed. The world of Roman reenactment and the world of prison are cultural models with their own hierarchies and system of values and valuable social goods, and as any cultural model they are “deeply implicated in “'politics'”. For Gee, this politics is “anything and anyplace (talk, texts, media, action, interaction, institutions) where 'social goods'

are at stake, things like power, status, or valued knowledge, positions, or possessions” (Gee 2011, 95-96). It is important to state here that the context for discourse analysis comprises “more than shared knowledge, however. Context includes the physical setting in which a communication takes place and everything in it; the bodies, eye gaze, gestures, and movements of those present; what has previously been said and done by those involved in the communication; any shared knowledge those involved have, including shared cultural knowledge” (Gee 2011, 100). This kind of “multimodal analysis of the different semiotic ‘modes’ (including language, visual images, body language, music and sound effects) and their articulation” is for Fairclough “critical discourse analysis” (Fairclough, 2010, 7).

Already in the introduction to his seminal book on this method, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, Malcolm Coulthard states almost as a disclaimer that there are “wide range of disciplines with differing ideas on what constitutes relevant and acceptable data” (Coulthard 19985, 11). In my discourse analysis I do not concentrate exclusively on the form, but predominantly on “the sense, reference and implications of sentences and parts of sentences” that reenactors, prisoners and film and theater directors produce (Coulthard 1985, 13). I do this while employing Hymes's “ethnography of speaking” as discourse analysis, and in this process I take into account the following important aspects: when it comes to “supra-sentential structuring” I recognize the aforementioned

'channels' as prominent "linguistic events" with "communicative value" whose meaning needs to be analyzed (as cited in Coulthard 1985, 34). In the framework of ethnography of speaking, "time and space [are among] the defining criteria of an event" (Coulthard 1985, 44). In that sense the words of the vice president and the president of GSR during their welcome speeches before the start of the reenactment in 2017 and 2018 are important just like the words of the Tavianis at the press conferences of the film release (ariveder lestelle 2017; Otto J 2018). Also, the place of the performance is crucial in the sense that it is a means for direct claiming of authenticity and historical accuracy, legitimacy and social status. The reenactors are among the few privileged people that can enter the site, let alone perform in it. They are the conveyors of the grandeur of Julius Caesar and ancient Rome today. So in that sense, among the most important characteristics of these discourse events that I am analyzing is their purpose. As Hymes writes, "the purpose of an event from a community standpoint may not be identical to the purposes of those engaged in it" (as cited in Coulthard 1985, 48). Coulthard is more explicit and states that "at every level of language individuals can exploit the system for personal or social reasons or artistic effects" (Coulthard 1985, 48). In event that is so charged with symbolism, political implications and appropriation of the sources, this is a matter that needs to be taken into account when analyzing the discourse. This suggests that another important aspect to be analyzed is the topic (Coulthard 1985, 49). Together with this also goes the

form of the message. I understand and analyze the form as a *face*, a term that, as Coulthard informs us, “Brown and Levinson (1978) [...] borrow from Goffman (1976)” (*ibid.*, 50). I am particularly focused on the notion of the “positive face, ‘the positive, consistent self-image [...] crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated’” (Coulthard 1985, 50). The *face* is connected to the notion of the *key*, that is “the tone, manner or spirit in which an act or event is performed” (Coulthard 1985, 48). As Halliday writes, “the importance of intonation is [...] that it is a means of saying different things. If you change the intonation of a sentence you change its meaning” (as cited in Coulthard 1985, 99). In that sense I am decyphering, for instance, what it means when reenactors complain about the attitude of the authorities towards their reenactment and shout with rage in a welcome address before the performance or during different speeches in performance itself.

To cross-examine thematically and critically the discourse of the reenactors and prisoners I use the method employed by Gee and I ask the following questions: “How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?” (Gee 2011, 17); “What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact?” (Gee 2011, 18); “What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others?” (Gee 2011, 19); “What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating?” (Gee 2011, 19),

and “How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems?” (Gee 2011, 20).

The integration of these three forms of analysis creates a comprehensive cultural analysis of the phenomenon, that has been employed in the studies of reenactment (Johnson 2016, 52), and that provides an understanding of the relationship of the case studies and the source text, participants, audience and socio-political context of production and distribution.

4. 5. Disposition of the chapters

In the next chapter I am going to present the performance of the reenactment of Ides of March, including my own experiences and related activities that precede and follow the performance. While describing and analyzing the reenactment, the paratext and activities before and after key scenes, if not stated otherwise, I will draw mostly on the performance from 2018 and in 2019, when I attended the reenactment in the role of participant-observer. The chapter after that analyzes the film *Caesar Must Die*, and is succeeded by a chapter on Cavalli’s theatrical staging of Shakespeare’s play. The thesis ends with the section that discusses the conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5. Case Study I: The historical reenactment of the Ides of March 44 BC

5.1. Introduction

The reenactment of the Ides of March has in 2019 reached its 16th edition.³ Only in 2015 and in 2019 the local

³ Duration: The part at Largo Argentina lasts around 50-55 minutes. The funeral procession lasts around 30 minutes (towards the end of the procession 'Calpurnia' performs her monologue that lasts around 4 minutes). The repetition of the scene III at the Forum lasts around 15 minutes. Inauguration speeches (president and vice president of GSR) last around 5 minutes (ariveder lestelle 2017, 00:01). Audio recordings introducing the association and the reenactment last around a minute and a half (ariveder lestelle 2017, 5:21-6:42). Audio recording introducing the historical context lasts around 4 minutes (ariveder lestelle 2017, 8:00-12:12). Audio recording introducing scene I lasts less than 3 minutes (ariveder lestelle 2017, 12:00-12:43). Scene I lasts around 10 minutes (Immagini romane 2016, 0:02-9:34, ariveder lestelle 2017, 12:44-21:44; NotizieRoma 2018, 0:00-10:05; Immagini romane 2019, 00:15-7:38; NotizieRoma 2019, 0:00-09:00). Audio recording introducing scene II lasts around 4 minutes (ariveder lestelle 2017, 21:44-27:35, NotizieRoma2018, 10:05-16:05; NotizieRoma 2019, 10:08-16:00). Scene II lasts around 3 minutes (Immagini romane 2016, 9:56-11:57, ariveder lestelle 2017, 26:45-30:00, ariveder lestelle 2017, NotizieRoma2018, 15:10-18:55; Immagini romane 2019, 7:44-10:30; NotizieRoma 2019, scene II 15:10-18:30). Audio recording introducing scene III lasts around 2 and a half minutes (Immagini romane 2016, 11:57-12:31; NotizieRoma2018, 18:47-19:22). Scene III lasts around 12 minutes (Immagini romane 2016, Brutus's speech 12:31-14:50, Mark Antony's speech 14:51-22:33; ariveder lestelle 2017, Brutus's speech 30:00-32:40, Mark Antony's speech 32:40-40:25; NotizieRoma2018, 19:30-, Brutus's speech 20:05-22:42, Mark Antony's speech 22:55-31:26; Immagini

authorities and conservators have granted the permission to perform the scenes I, II and III of the reenactment within the archeological site *Area sacra di Largo di Torre Argentina*. On other occasions the reenactment was performed on a small pedestrian square in *Via di S. Nicola de' Cesarini* next to the site.

The reenactment has been directed by GSR and since 2014 it was directed in collaboration with theatrical association *Imprenditori di Sogni*, managed by Yuri Napoli, Claudia Natale, Roberta Amoroso (Terentivs 2014a; Iacomoni 2016a; Imprenditori di Sogni, n.d.). It is based on three key scenes. The first scene presents a Senate meeting from January 49 BC (Terentivs 2014a). In the presence of Mark Antony, Cato, Cicero, senators and tribunes of the plebs, a part of the senators threaten to declare Caesar public enemy if he doesn't dissolve his legions and returns to Rome as a private citizen. The second scene shows the Senate meeting from 15 March 44 BC. In this scene Caesar arrives to *Curia Pompeia*, he is warned by Spurinna to beware the Ides, and the assassination takes place. In the third scene Brutus and Mark Antony deliver their famous Shakespearean monologues. Video recordings from 2010, 2012 and 2014 available on YouTube, as well as the press release from 2013, show that in those years only Mark Antony's oration

romane 2019, 10:35-, Brutus's speech 10:57-16:02, Mark Antony's speech 16:03-23:46; NotizieRoma 2019, scene III: Brutus's speech 18:50-24:05, Mark Antony's speech 24:00-31:50). The audio recording after scene III lasts around 2 minutes (ariveder lestelle 2017, 40:25-42:20, NotizieRoma 2019 31:50-34:35; NotizieRoma 2018 31:32-33:34).

was delivered, suggesting that Brutus's has not been added before 2015 (thor2988 2010g, 00:01; Longinuspileus 2012, 9:45; Longinuspileus 2014, 00:01; Roma Capitale 2013a). The earliest video recordings that testify to the performance of Brutus's speech stem from 2015 (Bianchi 2015, 03:25; La Torre 2015, 00:01).

After the third scene, since 2017, a funeral procession takes place. The procession consists of legionaries from *Decima Legio* and *Gruppo Storico Romano*, standard bearers, women playing the drums, reenactors carrying Caesar's life masks, lictors, women reenacting common Roman people crying for Caesar, the soothsayer Spurinna, legionaries carrying the body (mannequin) of Caesar on a litter, senators, and the audience (Piemontese 2018). The procession goes from *Largo Argentina* and *Via di S. Nicola de' Cesarini* through *Via delle Botteghe Oscure*, *Via di San Marco*, *Largo Enrico Berlinguer*, *Piazza di San Marco*, *Piazza Venezia*, and goes into the street *Via dei Fori Imperiali*. In some years, in front of Caesar's statue in *Via dei Fori Imperiali* Brutus and Mark Antony repeated their monologues, and reenactors placed a commemorative laurel wreath next to the statue of Caesar (fieldnotes 2017; Longinuspileus 2014, 10:50; Angelini 2010, xvii; thor2988. 2010f). Thanks to an agreement with a prestigious institution within Italian Ministry of Culture – the Archeological Park of Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palatine Hill – in 2018 and in 2019 the procession did not make a stop in *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, but continued through *Via della Salara Vecchia* to Roman Forum. It descended to the temple of Caesar, where the performance ended with

'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony' repeating their monologues. In 2018 and 2019, however, while the procession was still descending to the forum, a female reenactor playing Caesar's wife Calpurnia delivered a fictional monologue in which she cried for Caesar.

Until 2017, there was no procession at all and after Mark Antony's speech, legionaries from *Decima Legio* and *Gruppo Storico Romano*, together with the reenactor playing Caesar, placed a big laurel wreath next to the archeological site at *Largo Argentina* to commemorate Julius Caesar (wwwc6tv 2011, 2:26; Longinuspileus 2012, 19:35; Roma Capitale 2013a; Walks 2013, 8:38; askanews 2014, 0:25; Clemente 2014c; Immagini romane 2016, 22:45), "according to a tradition reserved for the great men of the fatherland" (Roma Capitale 2014).

The reenactment has been based on the same scenes and the same script for years, that is passed on from year to year. The script is taken from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for the second and third scene, while reenactors themselves have written the first scene, the funeral procession and Calpurnia's monologue. The first scene and the funeral procession are to some extent based on historical sources, while Calpurnia's monologue is completely fictional. In 2016, 2017 and 2019, the 'senators' did not leave the stage in the intermission between the second and the third scene. All of these variations are significant because they demonstrate how the reenactment of the Ides has been developing in the last 10 years, and how it has been

supported more and more by Roman authorities, i.e. in 2017 they were first granted the permission to perform the funeral procession around the symbolic topoi in the city centre – *Piazza Venezia*, the Altar of the Fatherland, *Via dei Fori Imperiali* – culminating in 2018 and in 2019 when they were allowed to enter the Roman Forum and perform the last part the reenactment in front of Caesar's temple.

The leading roles (Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, Spurrinna, Casca, Metellus Cimber, Cicero) have been played in the last several years by the same reenactors, and they always seem to be performed by prominent members of the association: e.g. “Caesar” was the vice president of the association, “Brutus” is a part of their executive committee and is the person responsible for external relations, and “Cicero” is a retired and decorated army general, their *legatus legionis* and person responsible for their “Didactic History Museum of the Roman Legionary”, that has been awarded a silver medal by the President of Italy (Quartieri, 2015). The preparations for the reenactment in that sense do not start from the beginning every year.

The history of the reenactment of the Ides of March and its beginnings are treated mysteriously. In the advertisement of the performance in 2019 reenactors state that they have been organizing the reenactment for the last 16 years consecutively (GSR 2019a). When I tried to find out specific details, e.g. when did they first perform this reenactment and how it looked like, they always avoided the answer. Reenactors seemed reluctant to talk about when it all began

and how it looked like. In order not to antagonize them and jeopardize my research, that is, my relationship with them and the opportunity for my participant observation, I was not able to push these questions too much.

The only thing reenactors would say in informal conversations was that in the beginnings, their reenactments were not so elaborate. In an interview with a renactor who is presented as the 'author', I was told that “in the beginning they did a ceremony. They went to *Largo Argentina* and did some recitations”. “I said: 'Why don't we do something more organic, why don't we do a reenactment of everything?', and so I started to write it, to do it in a more theatrical form”, stated the 'author' of the reenactment (PL1NPI_04, 06:15). However, an issue of GSR's bi-monthly magazine *Acta Bimestria* from 2010 shows that in that year the event comprised “a performance of a repertory of maneuvers and tricks by the 11th legion. [...] Simultaneously a picket of honor of praetorians from the IV Pretoria Cohort was lined up on the sides of the statue of Caesar. 'Senators' and the 'Roman' people contributed to recreate the atmospheres and sensations of a remote past. The climax of the event was achieved by the ceremony of the deposition of a laurel wreath by a group of praetorians, that was preceded by a brief but historical reconstruction of the murder of Julius Caesar from the part of conspiring senators and followed by Mark Antony's funeral oration” (Angelini 2010, xvii). This suggests that at that time the emphasis was on the commemoration, on the placing of the laurel wreath at the statue as well as on the playful

spectacle by 'Roman soldiers'. This is important because it suggests that in the beginning the original motivation and the aim of the reenactment was not that of historical reconstruction or cultural mediation and education. On the other hand, today the reenactment is given as such, as a complete product and its "prototypes" should not be questioned. No information about its beginnings are accessible to the public or to me as a researcher, e.g. the first public videos available on Internet date back to 2010, and they show the performance of the reenactment in *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, in front of Caesar's statue (thor2988, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f, 2010g).

5.2. State of the art: literature review

Although reenactments by GSR supposedly caught attention even of the Vatican Secret Service, whose agents, I was told by one reenactor, joined their association for several months to investigate what kind of rituals they were doing (PL1VIG_01), Roman reenactment has not been extensively studied by scholars. In fact, despite its significance as a mode of reception, very few Classicists have so far studied the world of Roman reenactment in general. Among those relatively few publications, works by Erika Berto (2010a, 2010b, 2014), Andrea Ferretti (2016), Fiamma Lenzi and Simona Parisini (2014), and Marxiano Melotti (2010, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017) stand out.

In her undergraduate thesis Berto (2010a) provided an overview of Roman reenactments in Italy in the early 2000s: the main groups and events, and their characteristics. By

using an exploratory approach, she proposed, rather positively and without much elaboration, Roman reenactments as examples of living history, historical reconstruction, experimental archeology and ethnoarcheology. Building on an article by Susanna Tatari from 2005 (as cited in Berto 2010a, 18), Berto traced the origins of the phenomenon of reenactment in ancient Roman spectacles, something that some established scholars of reenactment and Classics have mentioned in their publications only several years later (Hochbruck 2013 as cited in Koch, Samida 2013a, 2013b; Samida 2014, 144; Carlà-Uhink, Fiore 2016, 195). She focused on a particular case study, a reenactment association from northern Italy – *Il Gruppo Storico della Legio I Italica* (Villadose, Rovigo) – and she presented the organization and the activities of this association. In her penultimate chapter of this very useful thesis Berto pointed out to Roman reenactment groups in Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia and Spain, suggesting in this way that Roman reenactments are not exclusively an Italian, but rather a global phenomenon. Even if her short overview is very useful, her thesis does not study the particular role of Roman reenactment in nationalist and patriotic context in Italy, as a celebration of the Italianness and the roots and an important aspect of Italian identity.

Understandably, as a BA student, Berto was very affirmative of everything the association she studied was

doing, and she was not as critical as she may have been if she was a senior scholar. Her writing is useful to the extent that it provides a good overview of Roman reenactment in the early 2000s and it shows that the phenomenon can be analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. On the other hand, more progress is possible actually in the analyses from these perspectives she mentions. In addition, even though she somewhat recognized the importance of GSR in the world of Roman reenactment, the thesis shows no awareness of the existence of the reenactment of the Ides of March, let alone discusses it (Berto 2010a, 31, 72).

Furthermore, Ferretti (2016), a Roman reenactor himself, in his MA thesis discussed Roman reenactments as a tool of public history. Most of the thesis is dedicated to theorizing public history and other concepts connected to Roman reenactments. Ferretti analysed the concepts of authenticity, consumerism, education and spectacle as disputable characteristics of reenactments. He stated that good reenactments are a form of *edutainment*, education and entertainment at the same time, like the festival *Tarraco Viva* in Taragona (Spain) and *Grand Jeux Romaines* in Nimes (France). On the other hand, he insightfully states that if the aspect of entertainment prevails over education, it can lead to disneyization of history (Ferretti 2016, 83). Unfortunately, he doesn't elaborate on that in detail. On that particular note it could actually be argued against these two mentioned cases, especially the latter, as an example of commodified products intended for societies of

spectacle looking for *simulacra*. Peculiarly, there is no mention of GSR or their Ides of March in the thesis. It is implausible that Ferretti was not aware of their existence since he has been engaged in Gallo-Roman reenactments. Instead, he opted for the slippery field of writing about an organization of which he is a member (Ferretti 2016, 7).

Furthermore, a volume edited by Lenzi and Parisini (2014) gathered articles written by scholars and reenactors, who introduced acritically different Italian associations dedicated to Roman reenactment, and sometimes also the use of their activities in museological and territorial marketing strategies, as the subtitle of the volume states - *il contributo della rievocazione dell'evo antico al marketing museale e territoriale*. One can see that there is an interesting interaction between scholars and performers of Roman reenactments. There are also university professors who perform in- or collaborate with and study Roman reenactments, such as Eric Teyssier (2017) from the University of Nimes, Giovanni Brizzi from the University of Bologna (mentioned in Berto 2010a, 43) or Valentino Nizzo (2017, 15) from *Scuola Normale Superiore* in Pisa, the director of the prestigious National Etruscan Museum *Villa Giulia* in Rome.⁴ On the same note, it is important to point

⁴ There are other scientists collaborating with Roman reenactors, and other Roman reenactors publishing about their experiences or about history of ancient Rome. Professor Filippo Carlà-Uhink collaborated with a Roman reenactor Danielle Fiore and has written about her experiences in two articles: Carlà-Uhink, Filippo and Danielle Fiore.

out that there are a number of Roman reenactors who write about Roman history or reenactments, some of whom lack formal background in history or related disciplines, like Giuseppe Cascarino and Stefano Crivelli, who both have degrees in engineering and who perform in GSR's reenactment of the Ides of March 44 BC. Cascarino, one of

“Performing Roman Empresses and Matronae: Ancient Roman Women in Re-enactment.” In *Archäologische Informationen* 39 (2016): 195 – 204; Carlà-Uhink, Filippo and Danielle Fiore. “L'abito fa l'antico Romano: Reflections on Historical Clothes as Diachronical Garments in Exchange.” In *Voices* 2 (2017), unpaginated, accessed January 28, 2019, <https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/7825/1/voices-clothes-FINAL.pdf>.

Professor Gregory S. Aldrete uses Roman reenactments in his teachings at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, see “Gregory S. Aldrete”, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, accessed January 28, 2019, <https://www.uwgb.edu/alldreteg/>. Sven Straumann, archeologist and a PhD student, who is also a Roman reenactor, has written about Roman reenactment festival at *Augusta Raurica* in which he participates, and has mentioned an archeologist Andres Furger, former Direktor of the Swiss National Museum as a Roman reenactor, see Straumann, Sven. “Lebendige Geschichte am Römerfest Augusta Raurica.” In *KGS Forum: Inszenierung von Kulturgut*, Nr. 29 (2017): 61-69; Straumann, Sven. “Panem et circenses’ – Das Römerfest Augusta Raurica und wie alles begann.” In *Augusta Raurica –Das Magazin zur Römerstadt* 1 (2015): 10-14. Evan Schultheis, a Roman reenactor and a graduate student of history at the Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, writes about Roman history for the *Ancient Warfare Magazine* and is preparing a book about “The Battle of the Catalaunian Fields AD451: Flavius Aetius, Attila the Hun and the Transformation of Gaul” (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Military, forthcoming). Flavius Aetius is his reenacting alter ego. Finally, we can see that Roman reenactment is not exclusively an Italian phenomenon. Quite the contrary, people from all over the world try in this way to revive Roman history and to be a part of it.

the founders of the Italian Society for Ancient Military Studies and the president of the reenactment association *Decima Legio*, whose members also take part in the reenactment of the Ides of March, authored several books on Roman army (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017). One of those, as is claimed on the website of his reenactment association, supposedly even “entered the syllabus of a university course on Roman military history at the University of Bologna” (Decima Legio, n.d.).

Crivelli published a book on emperor Hadrian and a book on “101 citations about Rome” (2015a, 2015b). Most recently he published a book on history of Rome from its foundation to 21st century, *La storia e il giorno. Almanacco di Roma*, where he wrote about famous dates, places, people and events from city's history (2018). In his almanac Crivelli referred also to the Ides of March 44 BC, explaining it briefly as the day on which “Julius Caesar is assassinated with 23 stabs by a group of conspirators including his adopted son Brutus. Before he died, he seemed to have the strength to say, 'You too, O Brutus, my son!'" (Crivelli 2018). It is noteworthy that Crivelli reports the last phrase without naming either the historical (Suet.Juls.82.2) or literary source (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.85). Also, he does not use the original Shakespeare's version – *Et tu, Brute?* Then fall Caesar! – but an appropriated Italian translation of Suetonius's Greek phrase: “*Anche tu, o Bruto, figlio mio?*”. At last, similarly to the reenactment of the Ides by GSR, Crivelli does not provide a critical commentary of this

highly controversial historical episode. Instead, by mentioning the conspirators and the parricide, and by emphasizing the number of the stabs, he subtly frames Caesar as an innocent victim of a cruel and treacherous crime.

Finally, the biggest contribution to the study of *GSR*'s reenactments has been provided by sociologist Marxiano Melotti, who indicates that there is a political dimension connected to reenactments of *GSR*. This dimension is scarcely acknowledged by reenactors in interviews or in their publications. More precisely, reenactors try to negate any controversial or possible Fascist connotations or aims of their activities, even if two very prominent members in their interviews acknowledged that some politicians or institutions make similar connections and, therefore, they do not want to collaborate with them (PL1VIG_01, PL1AA_2). In fact, already in 1994, when *GSR* was founded under another name, a journalist Andrea Cangini raised the question of their Roman reenactments being “delusions of grandeur of some nationalist zealots”. Obviously very attracted and impressed by their new hobby, Cangini firmly negated any possible delusions or nationalism of *GSR*'s founders (as cited in *GSR* 2019f).

Melotti writes how a former Roman mayor, Gianni Alemanno, a “politician with a fascist background” in Melotti's words, sponsored *GSR*'s reenactments of the Birthday of Rome and of the Battle of the Milvian bridge,

both very important dates in the Fascist calendar of *romanità* (Melotti 2014, 2015). In fact, Alemanno used to give start to the famous GSR's so called "historical procession" for the Birthday of Rome (as cited in Il Tempo 2010). Stefano Busolini, former public relations officer of GSR, admitted in an interview for *La Repubblica* that the celebration of the anniversary of the Birthday of Rome was "one of the festivities that was established during Fascism [...] and today has been relaunched by GSR as a local holiday" (Toce 2016). This downplaying of the Fascist connection is contrasted by today's GSR's policy of promoting the festivity as "one of the 10 most beautiful spring events in Europe" (GSR n.d.d).

Fascist origins of this festivity have also been recognized in the public discourse and in Italian newspapers (Redazione Romadaleggere 2014; Zorfini 2016; Chiodi 2018). As Emilio Gentile, a historian of Fascism writes, the Birthday of Rome was one of the most important anniversaries for fascists, and its celebration was supposed to demonstrate direct connections between Roman history and contemporary Italy (as cited in Melotti, 2015). And precisely the connections of Roman history and Italians today is something reenactors from GSR stress often.

On the other hand, the president of GSR, Sergio Iacomoni, has tried to deny this connection in a blog post after the celebrations of the anniversary in 2018. This was counterproductive as he indirectly recognized the issue

because he wrote that “perhaps somebody has realized that the history of ancient Rome has nothing to do with Fascism, since the leading reenactors of Roman history are French and English” (Iacomoni 2018). This obviously doesn't stand as an argument against Fascist connotations of reenactments. What is more, in an interview from 2009 he acknowledged that “not so long ago people didn't talk about ancient Rome - celebrating [our] heritage was confused with fascism” (Ford 2009). However, it was Alemanno himself who stated that GSR “has held up the torch of the event even in the darkest of years, [and now] have a friendly administration at [their] side who will know how to valorize it” (Il Tempo 2010). Alemanno obviously implies at the time when his predecessors Walter Veltroni (2001-2008) and Francesco Rutelli (2006-2008) held the office of the mayor of Rome, the first coming from center-left, and the second from a centrist political party, also leaning to the left. This also implies that cultivators of more conservative and right-wing ideas and ideologies are attracted and support the reenactments of ancient Rome, and not liberals or proponents of progressive trends in society.

The Fascist connection arises again when looking at the second most important “Roman” date in the Fascist calendar mentioned in the upper paragraph, the anniversary of the Milvian battle. On that day in 1922 tens of thousands of Fascists marched on Rome resulting in appointing Mussolini the prime minister of Italy, making it

another crucial event in Fascist history (Melotti 2015). This means that the celebrations of the anniversary of the Fascist march are then always tied to celebration of ancient Rome. The Milvian battle is important for Fascist symbolism because it resulted in Roman Empire being united under the rule of one man, Constantine, and one religion, Christianity.

This event too has been commemorated and reenacted by *GSR* several times: in 2007 their reenactment of the battle “was sponsored by the XX Municipality of Rome”, and prominent politicians took part in what was called the “traditional procession”, without mentioning that this 'tradition' was established by the Fascists (C. T. 2007). According to a newspaper article, in 2012 *GSR* received 15.000€ by the local government for the organization of the 1700th anniversary of the battle (Longo 2012). Again in 2018 they organized a conference about the battle, where among speakers there was a historical novelist who wrote two books about controversial topics coinciding with a disturbing perspective: one about “more than 120 Hitlers generals”, and another one on “101 stories about Mussolini that you've never been told”, as it is stated on the publisher's website (NewtonCompton, n.d.; Romars 2018).

However, Melotti does not address the relationship between the aforementioned reenactments and the Ides of March, despite the importance of the commemoration of

the Ides under Fascism. Furthermore, he does not deepen his discussion of the relationship between *GSR* and politics on local, regional and national level. He does not take into account periods before or after mayor Alemanno's term, even if other Roman mayors and other municipal, regional and state officials do have a relationship with Ides of March or other reenactments by *GSR*. Quite the opposite, he states that “the Municipality and the Superintendences for cultural heritage seem to ignore with obstinacy these forms of valorization and dissemination of patrimony”. It is not clear here if they ignore reenactments because of their Fascist connotations or for some other reason. In the end, it is not clear also if these reenactments are considered by Melotti to be neofascist revivals or, in his own words, “forms of valorization and dissemination of patrimony” (2013, 147).

Finally, other Italian reenactment scholars until this moment do not even seem to recognize the importance of these issues, e.g. even a recent, otherwise very good Italian volume on Italian reenactment (Dei, Di Pasquale 2017) fails to acknowledge the importance of Roman reenactment and the reenactment of the Ides of March as a characteristic national practice in Italy and its ambiguous relationship to politics and an understanding of national identity, what this thesis is investigating.

5.3. *Analysis and Interpretation*

5.3.1. *The relationship with the source text(s): Literary and historical analyses*

5.3.1.1. *The question of the authorship*

In an interview I conducted with one reenactor, I was told that the author of the script was a decorated army general from GSR, who confirmed that in his interview too (PL1NPI_04, 06:15). He emphasized that he wrote both the introductory narratives that are heard as sound recordings before the beginning, in between and after the scenes, as well as the scenes themselves. He also stated that the first scene was written by another prominent member of the association (PL1NPI_04, 06:15; field notes 2019). In fact, this is the 'senator' that during my field work sessions seemed to be in charge because he appeared to know the most about Roman history (field notes 2018, 2019). I also learnt that he was a retired army general too. In informal conversations with reenactors I have learnt that reenactors playing Mark Antony and Brutus adapt their monologues as they deem best. I have also learnt that the funeral procession was written by a third reenactor, by then an ex member of the association (field notes 2019). These reenactors don't have a degree in script writing, theater studies, acting, Roman history or any similar field. However, some of the reenactors attended the "theatrical writing course" realized by theatrical directors that collaborate with them, *Imprenditori di Sogni* (PL1NPI_05,

02:05). This organization is in different press releases presented either as directors or collaborators of the directors (GSR) of the reenactment (Terentivs 2014a; Iacomoni 2016a; *Imprenditori di Sogni*, n.d.). However, this alleged work on the script is disputable particularly in the second and third scene, where reenactors are reproducing Shakespeare's lines. It is also disputable when it comes to the first scene, because a video recording available on YouTube shows that the scene looked the same even before the start of collaboration with *Imprenditori di Sogni* (Longinuspileus 2012). This implies that the contribution of collaborating theatrical directors is not substantial when it comes to the script of this reenactment. On the other hand, I have seen *Imprenditori di sogni* function as presenters of the reenactment in the program before and after the performance where they presented the association, the reenactment and interviewed different collaborators. In 2019 they interviewed the president and vice president of GSR, professor Malavolta of GSR's Scientific Committee, Marina Mattei, the scientific director of the archeological excavations at the site, and Gianfranco Gazzetti, the president of the association of Roman archeologists, *Gruppo Archeologico Romano*.

Furthermore, although reenactors generally say as a disclaimer that they follow historical sources as much as possible, in the interviews and informal conversations I was told either that the three reenactors were the authors of the reenactment, or that Shakespeare was the author (field notes 2019). In the press release of the reenactment in 2019

GSR stated that the reenactment was “a real theatrical staging that draws its texts from historians and writers who have dedicated their studies to the tragic events of the death of Julius Caesar”(GSR 2019a). No specific historians or writers have been named ever. There is no mention of particular historical source as such when it comes to the first scene or the funeral procession, the parts of the script not taken from Shakespeare's play. However, at the press conference that announced the reenactment in 2019, the associate professor Mariano Malavolta stated that the rough draft of the reenactment that his Department of history at the University Roma Tor Vergata received for evaluation from GSR in their view “was optimally designed also from the point of view of the texts used” (Iacomoni 2019c, 4:40). He as well didn't refer to any particular source as such, leaving this question open.

5.3.1.2. Scene I: A Senate meeting from 49 BC

The performance of the first scene is preceded by welcome speeches by the president and the vice president of GSR who present their association and the reenactment. It is also preceded by two sound recordings: one again presenting the association and the historical context, and another one presenting the scene to be performed (ariveder lestelle 2017). As the recording announces, the scene shows “a meeting of the Senate, solicited by the consuls with the intention of stopping Caesar's rise, preventing his candidacy for the second consulate” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 08:10). However, we are not told exactly which meeting

from January 49BC we are witnessing. This is a mixture of events and Senate meetings that happen 5 years before the time in which Shakespeare's play and therefore the second and third scene of the reenactment are set.

As Andrew Lintott points out, "most of the main accounts of Caesar's assassination, as of his reforms and projects, were composed at least 150 years after the event by people for whom the rule of the emperors was inevitable and the best government possible, the murdered dictator being the hero-founder of that form of government" (Lintott 2009, 72). So in that sense they can be trustworthy only to an extent. As Weinstock mentions when writing about Cimber pulling Caesar's toga to give sign for the start of the attack, "there is no doubt that facts and fiction were similarly mixed in the other parts of the description of the murder" (Weinstock 1971, 347). For instance, as Lintott writes of Nicolaus's of Damascus account on the assassination, "the underlying causes of the plot were a mixture of personal resentment and true or bogus republican sentiment, provoked by both Caesar's current behavior and fears over his future plans" (Lintott 2009, 72).

The ancient accounts of the events reenacted in the first scene, those by Hirtius, Cicero, Livy, Florus, Plutarch, Suetonius, Appian and Cassius Dio, are well summarized in Erich Gruen's famous book on "the last generation of the Roman Republic" (first edition 1974; 1995), as the title itself states, and in an article by Frank A. Sirianni (1993). Both works talk about different senatorial and unofficial secret

meetings that happened in December 50 BC and January 49 BC. Sirianni reports that at that time Caesar, through his supporter Caius Scribonius Curio, proposed that both he and Pompey disband their legions, and in the beginning of December 50 BC this motion was passed in the Senate (Gruen 1995, 486; Goldsworthy 2006, 368; Ramsey 2009, 53; Raaflaub 2009, 175). In the reenactment, however, this motion is proposed by 'Mark Antony', who conveys Caesar's proposal in which he offers that both commanders besides renouncing their legions also renounce their provinces too, and become private citizens (NotizieRoma 2018, 7:05). According to Von Fritz, this Caesar's proposals were made on 1 January 49BC (Von Fritz 1941, 126). Like in the historical sources, in the reenactment neither of these motions are passed. On the contrary, they are rejected by ardent protesters. Caesar himself writes about difficult opposition his supporters faced in the Senate (as cited in Raaflaub 2009, 176). Among these, 'Cato' is particularly passionate. He gets up, and as in previous editions in the reenactment, he points his finger in the air and swears histrionically "in the name of Jupiter Maximus" that he will condemn Caesar for his illegal enrichment if he returns to Rome without his army and as a private citizen (Immagini romane 2019, 01:16). It is important to note that these words are almost identical to what Suetonius writes: "Cato continually gave notice, even indeed swore, that he would prosecute Caesar as soon as he had dismissed his army, and it was commonly predicted that if Caesar returned a private citizen he would have to defend himself in a court

surrounded by armed men, just as had happened with Milo” (as cited in Pelling 2009, 259; Suet.Jul.30).

As Sirianni reports, since Caesar's opponents in the Senate continued conspiring against him and declined his proposal, several days after, through his intermediaries Hirtius and Metellus Scipio, Caesar asked Pompey to keep the provinces Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum and two legions, until his next consulate started (Sirianni 1993, 220-221; Canfora 2007, 132). Along the same lines, Ramsey reports that Caesar “complained that by demanding his return from Gaul in January 49, his enemies were depriving him of half a year of his governorship because the dispensation granted to him by Law of the Ten Tribunes should have permitted him to remain in Gaul for another six months and sue for the consulship of 48 *in absentia*” (Ramsey 2009, 48). This is also proposed by 'Mark Antony' in the same scene of the reenactment. In Caesar's name 'Mark Antony' asks for one legion and Illyricum if he cannot get Cisalpine Gaul and two legions, something that in historical sources happens several days after in a private meeting (Gruen 1995, 488; Canfora 2007, 132; Cristofoli 2008, 39; Raaflaub 2009, 175). In the reenactment we are seeing the same Senate meeting, not a different meeting like in the historical sources. Also, there is no Pompey at the meeting in the reenactment.

According to historical sources, after Pompey's refusal Caesar made another proposal to the Senate, asking them to let him keep all of his provinces or that both he and

Pompey keep their legions until the end of the elections for new consuls. As Sirianni reports, this proposal was read on January 1st to the Senate by Curio. The consul Lucius Lentulus predicted that Caesar's proposal may be supported by the senators, so he "refused to submit it for discussion" (Sirianni 1993, 221). As Gruen points out, both consuls were "virulent anti-Caesarians" (Gruen 1995, 487). Canfora calls them "Caesar's personal enemies" (Canfora 2007, 132). In the reenactment this proposal is not presented to the 'Senate' and the 'consuls' show anti-Caesarian behavior, especially 'Lentulus'.

Furthermore, in both the reenactment and the historical sources Pompey demanded that the Senate does not accept Caesar's proposal. The Senate supported "a motion by Metellus Scipio that Caesar should lay down his command by a fixed date or be declared a *hostis*. Antony and Cassius vetoed this, whereupon the Senate responded with threats" (Sirianni 1993, 221-222). However, in the reenactment it is not Pompey who makes his demand or Metellus Scipio who proposes the motion, but other Pompey's supporters instead. In any case, the reenactors successfully evoke the "stormy debate" that historical sources report (as cited in Canfora 2007, 142). With this vote on Caesar being declared the enemy of the state the scene in the reenactment ends. According to the historical sources this happened on 7 January 49 BC (as cited in Von Fritz 1941, 143; Hillman 1988, 249, 251; Cristofoli 2014, 77).

Before that, historical sources report that “Cicero arrived in the outskirts of Rome on 4 January, and took part in unofficial peace talks at Pompey's country house. He supported a peaceful compromise, advising the acceptance of Caesar's proposals and suggesting that Pompey should go to Spain. Since Pompey would not agree to this, Cicero eventually succeeded in persuading Caesar's friends to reduce their demands to Illyricum and one legion. Pompey seemed inclined to accept this, but the consul Lentulus together with Cato restrained him from accepting. These private talks therefore came to nothing” (Sirianni 1993, 221-222, see also Canfora 2007, 133). These talks are not presented in the reenactment. Instead, 'Mark Antony' and not 'Cicero' like in the historical sources, makes this proposal in the aforementioned 'Senate' meeting, appearing to read from Caesar's letter. 'Cicero' plays a role in the reenactment in the sense that he implores the senators to let 'Mark Antony' read Caesar's letter and later supports Caesar's offer.

One can see that these complex historical events and confusing actions by different people, as elaborated in detail by the aforementioned authors, are condensed in the reenactment to only one senate meeting. That meeting is characterized by an aggressive dispute between 'pro-Caesarean senators' and 'supporters of Pompey'. In that sense as well the reenactors evoke the hostility of a part of the senators towards Caesar. In most editions this is embodied successfully by the reenactor playing the consul Lentulus, “bitter, irreconcilable enemy” of Caesar, in

Ramsey's words (2009, 53). The scene is characterized also by eager attempts of 'Caesar's supporters' to present him as a great servant and benefactor of the Roman Republic. However, 'Pompey's allies' prevail despite ardent protests. As it is shown, in the reenactment it is not 'Curio', 'Hirtius', 'Metellus Scipio' or 'Cicero' who present Caesar's offers, but always 'Mark Antony'. This corresponds to the historical sources in the sense that, as Ramsey points out, "from December 10 onwards, the chief role in defending Caesar's interests fell to the daring tribune Mark Antony" (Ramsey 2009, 53). The offers are not presented to 'Pompey' or on different occasions like in the historical sources, but they are presented to 'the Senate' in one meeting. However, the reenactment synthesizes the historical sources fairly well in this first scene. In addition, one of the most prominent 'senators' of GSR, Oscar Damiani, summarized the events preceding Caesar's assassination from a perspective similar to Sirianni's. He did it in an article about Caesar in GSR's magazine *Acta Bimestria* (Damiani 2011, v-xiii). Sirianni is, however, neutral and sticks to the facts, and Damiani praises Caesar to a great extent. He praises Caesar's conciliatory proposals, and criticizes Pompey and his supporters and suggests that Caesar "has taken arms against Rome to defend his rights and those of the tribunes", meaning the common people (Damiani 2011, xi). This is in line with the perspective of 'pro-Caesarean senators' represented in the reenactment. This also corresponds to Mommsenian view of the events. As Von Fritz writes, Mommsen "contended that all Caesar's

proposals were sincere and that it was only the folly and obstinacy of his opponents which made them reject these offers and so made a war to the bitter end inevitable" (Von Fritz 1941, 125). Fritz demonstrates that also E. Meyer and R. Syme have followed this direction of interpretation (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the script in general does not change but reenactors sometimes omit or change some words or lines e.g. at the opening of the senate meeting in the first scene the 'consul' in 2017 said they have met to discuss a matter important "for Rome and for Roman people", while in 2018 he just stated they were there to discuss "an important matter". Similarly, a moment after, when consul tried to silence the senators, in 2017 and in 2018 he simply yelled *silenzio!* – silence! – and in 2016 he emphasized that they were in a *curia*, suggesting it is a place where people are expected to behave decently (Immagini romane 2016, 01:03, ariveder lestelle 2017, 12:55, NotizieRoma 2018, 01:40). Another example comes slightly later from the same scene, from 'Lentulus's raging speech, that in 2018 finishes with words "it is like that, and it will be like that", that are simply not used in 2017 or in 2016. Furthermore, after 'Lentulus' finishes, 'Marcellus' gives the word to 'Cato', by saying "Senatori, sentiamo cosa ha da dire il nostro grande Catone!" in 2018. In 2017 he says only "Chiedo la parola il nostro grande Catone.", and in 2016 he employs 'senators' to be calm and to hear out 'Cato': "State seduti senatori, sentiamo cosa ha da dire il nostro grande Catone". There are more examples. In the next sequence of the same scene

when 'Cicero' starts speaking, he says: "Io Cicerone, durante il mio ultimo consolato, ho vissuto in prima persona *quello che ha fatto Catilina* [...] *lasciamo che il tribuno leggi la lettera di Cesare*" (NotizieRoma 2018, 04:05). In 2017 and in 2016 he phrases it differently: "Io Cicerone, durante il mio ultimo consolato, ho vissuto in prima persona *le tristi vicende scatenate da Catilina* [...] *consentiamo al rispettabile tribun' Antonio di leggere la lettera di Cesare*" (Immagini romane 2016, 03:30; arriverder lestelle 2017, 15:20).

After the threat that Caesar may be declared the enemy of the people, the scene ends and in the second scene the reenactment jumps from January 49 BC to 15 March 44 BC. This points out to the fact that the reenactors simplify the development of historical events in a sense that they portray only a few meetings of the Senate from five years before the assassination as the explanation of the reasons for the killing of Caesar. It may seem to an uninformed spectator that nothing significant happened in the these five long and intensive years.

5.3.1.3. Scene II: Caesar's assassination

The most famous ancient sources that talk about Caesar's assassination, presented in the second scene – Plutarch and Suetonius – are written more than one hundred and fifty years after the event (Pelling 2009, 252). In fact, besides the account of Nicolaus of Damascus, there are very few, marginal references to the assassination by other Caesar's contemporaries: Virgil, Cicero and Ovid. Ovid, actually, was not a contemporary of Caesar, but was born one year

after his assassination. Virgil, for instance, mentions only signs in nature that suggested something grave as the murder of Caesar was about to happen (Virgil G.1.461-497). Cicero states in his *Philippics* that prior to the murder he did not know anything about that “most glorious action”, and he expresses admiration for the conspirators; he calls them “gallant band” and justifies Caesar's assassination (Cic.Phil.2.11.25). Moreover, he writes about Lucius Tillius Cimber as “a man whom he admired for having performed that action”, and about “two Servilii” and “their affection for the republic” as the reason for their participation in the murder. Finally, he writes that “it is a glorious thing for the republic that they [the conspirators] were so numerous, and a most honourable thing also for themselves” (Cic.Phil.2.11.27). As it was shown in the analysis of the previous scene, and as will be shown in the analyses that follow, reenactors do not provide this point of view that defends the conspirators, let alone justifies or engrandizes them.

The historical context preceding the second scene is again introduced by a long sound recording that doesn't appear in Shakespeare's play at all. The recording also sums up the events from the morning of the Ides in accordance with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and the scene starts. In this scene the reenactors perform Act III Scene I from the play. However, all previous acts and scenes from Shakespeare's play are skipped. Also, there are some noteworthy changes and omissions to this scene itself and, again, the scene is reduced in comparison to the source text. In the

reenactment there is no Artemidorus giving Caesar his warning and there is no Popilius Lena wishing good luck to Casca. Therefore, Brutus and Casca are not discussing Lena's intervention as in Shakespeare. Several final instructions between Decius, Brutus and Cinna, who are getting ready for the execution of the conspiracy are also not performed in the reenactment (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.3-33). Even the dialogue between Caesar and Cimber before the start of the attack on Caesar is reduced to around mere 20 seconds in the reenactment (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.33-83).

Dando-Collins reports that "Caesar's entrance was announced by the chief lictor", but this doesn't happen in the reenactment (Dando-Collins 2010, 89). The same author also writes that "Caesar [was] wearing his gold - embroidered palm tunic, unique purple toga, and laurel - branch crown" (*ibid.*). In accordance with Shakespeare, the scene of the reenactment starts with 'Caesar's encounter with the soothsayer 'Spurinna' (Immagini romane 2019, 08:20; Folger Digital Texts 3.1.1-2). 'Caesar' says that the Ides of March have come and he is "alive and well", and these words are not reported by any of the Italian translations of the play (Praz 1993, 600; Raponi 2000, 53; 2015, 131; Lombardo 2000, 99; Giacomantonio 2011, 111 of 270; Perosa 2015, Kindle position 2019; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 1264).

'Caesar' then starts the meeting of the 'Senate' with words that correspond largely to Lombardo's and Perosa's

translations: “Siamo tutti pronti? Qualli torti debbono raddrizzare oggi Cesare e il (suo) Senato?” (Lombardo 2000, 103; Longinuspileus 2012, 07:40; 2015, 02:15; Perosa 2015, Kindle Position 1277). Other translators don't use the word *raddrizzare* but *riparare* (Praz 1993, 600; Raponi 2000, 55; 2015, 134-135; Giacomantonio 2011, 112 of 270; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 2040) 'Cimber' starts his plea. He uses the name Tillius Cimber like in historical sources, and not Metellus Cimber, like in Shakespeare (Folger Digital Texts n.d.; Plut.Brut.17.2.; Suet.Jul.82; Immagini romane 2019, 09:05). This is definitely done to be more historically correct, something reenactors strive to. However, it doesn't make much of a difference from this point of view, as they are still using Shakespeare's play as their script, and not any of the historical sources.

'Caesar' interrupts 'Cimber' in the beginning, like in Shakespeare, but he sums up Shakespeare's elaborate response to only a very short reply: “I have to interrupt you Cimber. If you are here for you're brother, know that he has been exiled by the Senate, and Caesar doesn't change the decisions of the Senate” (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.39-82; Longinuspileus 2012, 07:50; Immagini romane 2016, 10:45; 2019, 9:10; ariveder lestelle 2017, 28:30; NotizieRoma 2018, 17:08, 2019, 17:00). This contrasts other Italian translations that are much more faithful and elaborate to the English version of the play (Praz 1993, 600; Raponi 2000, 55; 2015, 135-136; Giacomantonio 2011, 112 of 270; Lombardo 2000, 103; Perosa 2015, Kindle position 1302; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 2055). Contrary to the play text, 'Brutus',

'Cassius' and 'Cinna' are not speaking in the reenactment and 'Caesar' doesn't respond to them too. 'Cimber' pulls the toga from 'Caesar's' shoulder. They get up. 'Caesar' yells: "This is violence", instead of "Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" and "Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.81-83). 'Cimber' pulls his toga violently and gives the mark to 'conspirators': "Friends, what are you waiting for?!", a line again not present in Shakespeare. 'Casca' yells the Shakespearean phrase "Speak, hands for me!" – "Parlate, mani per me!" and he 'stabs' 'Caesar' first (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.84). 'Caesar' runs among 'senators' who 'stab' him.

The last one is 'Brutus' to who 'Caesar' tells the famous phrase "*Et tu, Brute?*" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.85). Damiani's article in *Acta Bimestria* proves that reenactors are aware of Suetonius's record of the phrase and suggestion that Caesar actually said it in Greek (Suet.Jul. 82; Damiani 2011, xiii). However, as available video recordings demonstrate, in 2018, 2017, 2016 and 2012 'Caesar' says it in Italian - "*Anche tu, Bruto, figlio mio?!*" (Longinuspileus 2012, 08:20; Immagini romane 2016, 11:20; ariveder lestelle 2017, 11:15; NotizieRoma 2018, 18:05), not in Latin like in both the English text and in all the aforementioned Italian translations (Praz 1993, 601, Raponi 2000, 57; 2015, 138; Giacomantonio 2011, 113 of 270; Perosa 2015, Kindle position 1302; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 2066). In this way Italian language is equaled with Latin, as a prestigious language of the aristocracy, and Italian culture is equaled with the Classical culture. In 2015 and in

2019, however, 'Caesar' tells the famous phrase in Latin, but he still doesn't use Shakespeare's version, but "*Tu quoque, Brute, fili mi?*", another non-Shakespearean Latin version, one that they may find more historical (Longinuspileus 2015, 03:00; Ziogas 2016, 143; Immagini romane 2019, 09:42). They used this Latin version also in the press release for the reenactment in 2014, even if they misspelled a word from the phrase and wrote "quoqe" (Terentivs 2014a). In the announcement of the reenactment on their web page, even the Municipality of Rome reports this version of the phrase (Roma Capitale 2013a). In the same press release they translated the phrase back into English as "You too, Brutus, my son", another non-Shakespearean translation (Terentivs 2014a). Among all the aforementioned Italian translators, only Raponi mentions this wording in a footnote of his translation (Raponi 2000, 57; 2015, 138). This suggests that reenactors ground their performance in Raponi's translation, that will be more evident in the analysis of the third scene, that abounds with Shakespeare's script from Raponi's edition.

At the same time, pro-Caesarean 'senators' protest in shock and scream "Assassins, assassins! What are you doing?!". 'Caesar' doesn't say the Shakespearean line "Then fall, Caesar", but silently falls on the ground, and covers his head with the toga. 'Cinna', 'Cassius' and 'Brutus' celebrate the victory with short exclamations in accordance with the play text, and the scene stops here (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.85-91). Here the people in the audience stand for

“hundreds of stunned senators, [who] witnessed the attack on Caesar” (Dando-Collins 2010, 91).

5.3.1.4. *Scene III: the monologues*

Scene III of the reenactment in 2019 wasn't preceded by any sound recordings (NotizieRoma 2019, 18:25). This was done to compensate time, because reenactors performed their Shakespearean monologues more slowly ('Brutus') and in longer versions ('Mark Antony') and have therefore taken more time than in previous years. In the scene reenactors do not continue 3.1 from Shakespeare. Instead, they start with Brutus's speech from the forum scene, 3.2. A part of 3.1 between Caesar's assassination and Mark Antony's arrival to the crime scene is skipped. In that part in the play the assassins reassure Publius that nothing is going to happen to him. Trebonius states how Romans are terrified by what has happened. Brutus comments that they are “Caesar's friends, that have abridged His time of fearing death”. These parts, that depict conspirators in a relatively good light are not performed in the reenactment (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.115-116).

Furthermore, two important moments from the scene are also omitted. Firstly, the moment when Brutus asks other conspirators to “bathe (their) hands in Caesar's blood Up to the elbows, and besmear (their) swords” (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.118-119), a moment very important for the replacement of the individual culpability with collective culpability. Secondly, Cassius's and Brutus's metatheatrical interventions that follow, perhaps the most famous lines in

the history of theater: “How many ages hence Shall this our lofty scene be acted over in In states unborn and accents yet unknown! How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport, That now on Pompey's basis lies along No worthier than the dust!” (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1124-129). These lines are important because they acknowledge directly the metatheatrical aspect of the scene. Their exclusion adds to the reenactment's commemorative and revitalizing purpose. It also avoids the reminder that this is all a play. In addition, the encounter with Antony's servant is omitted and what follows next in the reenactment again breaks off with the sequence of events in the play.

In the reenactment 'Brutus' performs his oration at the Forum from the next scene in the play, 3.2 (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.214-49; Bianchi 2015, 03:25; Immagini romane 2016, 12:29-14:48; ariveder lestelle 2017, 30:10-32:40; NotizieRoma 2018, 19:50-22:45; 2019, 18:50-24:00; Iacomoni 2019b, 1:30-6:45). There's no Shakespearean introduction to the oration with 'citizens'. Instead, in the reenactment 'Brutus' starts *in medias res*. 'Brutus' performing the speech at Largo Argentina in 2019 is not the same reenactor as 'Brutus' that repeats the speech at the Roman Forum later. Both 'Brutuses' are using Goffredo Raponi's translation of the play (2000, 2015). This is a translation of Peter Alexander's version of the play from 1960 that is available online without purchase. In fact, this is the only Italian translation of the play that is available without purchase. This version is written in standard Italian language, and among all the aforementioned translations this one is the

least dramaturgic. It is almost not at all poetic and seems to be written almost in plain everyday Italian. The language of this translation is among all Italian translations of the play definitely the most similar to everyday Italian language reenactors use. Its language is simpler and easier to remember and pronounce than the language of all the other aforementioned translations.

What is more, 'Brutuses' follow Raponi's script almost word-for-word (Raponi 2000, 67-69; 2015, 156-160). At some points, however, they make Raponi's text even simpler than it is. For instance, the first 'Brutus' uses simpler words and verb tenses, e.g. "Cesare mi fu caro" instead of "Cesare m'ebbe caro" (Immagini romane 2019, 12:25). He skips some words within the phrases, e.g. "E chi c'è tra voi sì barbaro da rinnegare d'essere un Romano" instead of "Se alcuno c'è tra voi che sia sì barbaro da rinnegare d'essere un Romano" or "E chi c'è di tanto ignobile da non amare la patria?" instead of "E chi c'è qui tra voi di tanto ignobile da non amar la patria?" (Immagini romane 2019, 13:20). At other places the reenactors add nouns and pronouns where they are not there, usually to emphasize their own agency (Immagini romane 2019, 12:15, 12:25). The first 'Brutus' mixes the order of sequence of some lines, for instance, he first asks the 'citizens' not to leave before 'Mark Antony' finishes his speech and only after that he offers his dagger to 'Romans' if they will ever want him dead (Immagini romane 2019, 15:25). In Shakespeare, the sequence is opposite (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.46-49, 61-67). He also

changes the sequence of words within phrases, e.g. “né esagerati i suoi torti, per i quali egli ebbe la morte”, instead of “né i suoi torti per i quali ebbe morte, esagerati” (Immagini romane 2019, 13:15) or “ecco Marco Antonio venire a piangere il corpo di Cesare” instead of “Ecco, viene il suo corpo, pianto da Marcantonio” (Immagini romane 2019, 14:30).

Furthermore, video recordings available on YouTube demonstrate that in 2012, 2013 and in 2014 Brutus's oration was not performed in the reenactment, and the assassination was immediately followed by 'Mark Antony's speech (Longinuspileus 2012, 9:45; Walks 2013, 8:22; Longinuspileus 2014, 00:01; Bianchi 2015, 03:25). In 2015, when 'Brutus' performed his speech for the first time, this was preceded by 'Mark Antony' asking him the permission to perform a funeral oration for 'Caesar' (Bianchi 2015, 03:30). He did this at the end of the second scene. 'Brutus' gave him the permission, but stated that he will be the first to go to the rostra and explain to 'Romans' their reasons (Bianchi 2015, 03:30). This part of the scene was not performed in later editions of the reenactment and testifies to what kind of modifications have been made on the reenactment.

In Shakespeare, however, after Brutus finishes citizens not only cheer him but also affirm that “Caesar was a tyrant” and they were “blest that Rome is rid of him” (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.55.-59,75-78). This doesn't happen in

the reenactment. Instead, in video recordings from 2016 and in 2017 at different moments one can clearly hear reenactors playing common people yell to Brutus that he is an assassin and they wish him dead (Immagini romane 2016, 12:00; ariveder lestelle 2017, 29:25). Reenactors again reinforce the image of Caesar as the victim of conspirators' personal interests. On the same note, in 2018 they cheered Caesar's name before the beginning of 'Brutus's speech, as well as after 'Mark Antony's speech in 2017 by yelling "*Viva Cesare!*" (ariveder lestelle 2017, 40:10; NotizieRoma 2018, 19:50).

After the aforementioned Brutus's funeral oration from 3.2, 'Mark Antony' comes to stage and starts his speech not from the same funeral scene in 3.2, but his reaction from 3.1 when Mark Antony sees Caesar's dead body surrounded by conspirators at Pompey's curia (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.1.164-179). Again, 'Mark Antony' at Largo Argentina is the reenactor who performed this role in previous years, while the 2019 'Mark Antony' at the Forum used to perform Brutus's speech in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Unlike two 'Brutuses', that perform the identical lines from Raponi's translation of the play, the two 'Antony's choose different lines from the play, with the second 'Antony' delivering a much longer oration.

Again, a lot of Shakespeare's script is skipped: Antony's reconciliation with the conspirators, the agreement that Antony organizes a funeral for Caesar and that there first

Brutus and then Antony talk to Romans. This sequence is important because here Brutus forbids Antony to say anything negative about the conspirators, but at the same time allows him to praise Caesar. Also, Antony's promise of vengeance to dead Caesar's body from the end of 3.1. is not performed.

In the reenactment 'Antony' first pronounces the lines with which he first addresses the assassins in 3.1 (in the original: "O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low? Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, Shrunk to this little measure?", Folger Digital Texts 3.1.164-166). For "Fare thee well" (Folger Digital Texts 3.1.166) in 2019 he says "Ave Cesare, addio" (Immagini romane 2019, 16:25). In 2018 and in 2016 he says the same, but in 2017 he says "Vale, Cesare! Addio!" (Immagini romane 2016, 15:25; ariveder lestelle 2017, 33:15; NotizieRoma 2018, 23:40). This points out the differences in translation. Raponi writes "Vale, Cesare!" without the second part "addio" (Raponi 2000, 61; 2015, 146). Other Italian translators of the play do not use "Vale, Cesare!" like Raponi, but write only "Addio", without the "Ave Cesare" part that reenactors use (Praz 1993, 602; Lombardo 2000, 113; Giacomantonio 2011, 270 position of 270; Perosa 2015, Kindle position 1366 of 3808; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 2149 of 6326).

What is more, in 2012 and in 2014 'Mark Antony didn't use this line from 3.1. at all, and instead he immediately started his speech with the "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears" from 3.2. (Longinuspileus 2012, 10:15;

Longinuspileus 2014, 01:00; Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.82). All Italian translations except Raponi use the imperative form of the verb *lend* (Praz 1993, 604; Lombardo 2000, 129; Giacomantonio 2011, 120 of 270; Perosa 2015, Kindle position 2318; Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 1447). Even Vittorio Gassman and Mankiewicz's 'Antony' (in his Italian translation, however) both use the imperative (Michele 2012, 00:01; as cited in Mancini 2015, 03:00). Only Raponi, and consequently the reenactor, asks the 'Romans' if they want to "lend him their ears" in every year except 2018, when he exclusively used the imperative form (Longinuspileus 2012, 10:15; 2014, 01:00; La Torre 2015, 00:29; Immagini romane 2016, 15:30; 2019, 16:40; ariveder lestelle 2017, 33:15; NotizieRoma 2018, 23:50; Raponi 2000, 70; 2015, 161).

Unlike in Shakespeare, 'citizens' in the reenactment do not comment his speech. More precisely, at some moments they do it inaudibly among themselves, and even I as a participant-observer in 2018 and in 2019 could not always hear what they were saying, let alone the audience. Also, 'Mark Antony' does not perform the whole oration. He performs the first part (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.82-117, 130-149) before showing Caesar's wounds and reading the will. He also simplifies Raponi's text. When saying that he is there to bury Caesar, and not to praise him, he says "Io sono qui per dar' sepoltura a Cesare, non per celebrarlo" (Immagini romane 2019, 16:50), instead of "Io sono qui per dare sepoltura a Cesare, non già a farne le lodi" (Raponi 2000, 70; 2015, 161). Only Giacomantonio uses the "non per

celebrarlo” form, but the first part of the phrase in his translation differs from Raponi and the reenactor, he writes “io son qui per seppellire Cesare” (Giacomantonio 2011, 120 of 270). Similarly to 'Brutus' before him, 'Mark Antony' also mixes the sequences of words within the lines themselves and uses simpler words instead of those Raponi chose for his translation. He says “Il nobile Bruto v'ha detto che Cesare era uomo ambizioso di potere, e se così fu di certo una grave colpa, ed egli gravemente l'ha scantata, l'ha pagata” (Immagini romane 2019, 17:10), instead of “V'ha detto il nobile Bruto che Cesare era uomo ambizioso di potere: se tale era, fu certo grave colpa, ed egli gravemente l'ha scontata” (Raponi 2000, 70; 2015, 161).

The rest of the play after Antony's oration is not reenacted: the last scene of the third act (3.3.), and the fourth and fifth acts in total. The speech lasts around 7 minutes and since 'Antony' obviously has by far the highest number of lines in the reenactment, it is the longest oration in the reenactment (Longinuspileus 2012, 10:07-17:17; Longinuspileus 2014, 01:00-6:52; La Torre 2015, 00:28-07:03; Immagini romane 2016, 14:53-22:35; ariveder lestelle 2017, 32:45- 40:20; NotizieRoma 2018, 22:57-31:22; NotizieRoma 2019, 24:13-33:48).

Until 2019 'Antony' finished his Shakespearean monologue in the reenactment by saying to 'Romans' that he will not read Caesar's will, and by using Shakespeare's words and saying that if they knew the will, they would “kiss dead Caesar's wounds And dip their napkins in his sacred

blood-- Yea, beg a hair of him for memory, And, dying, mention it within their wills, Bequeathing it as a rich legacy Unto their issue" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2. 144-149). This depicts Caesar as a positive figure once again. These lines in Italian correspond not to Raponi's translation but seem to correspond closely to Giacomantonio's translation:

"Ma ecco una pergamena col sigillo di Cesare; l'ho trovata nel suo scrittoio; è il suo testamento. Se il popolo solo udisse le sue ultime volontà – che, perdonatemi, non intendo leggere – tutti si recherebbero a baciare le ferite sul corpo esanime di Cesare, e ad intingere i fazzoletti nel suo augusto sangue, sì, a implorare un suo capello per ricordo e, in punto di morte, farne menzione nel testamento, lasciandolo come preziosa eredità ai propri discendenti" (Giacomantonio 2011, 121 of 270).

However, the line that follows, corresponds to Gassman's version of Antony's monologue: "se io fossi Bruto e Bruto Antonio, qui ora ci sarebbe un Antonio che squasserebbe i vostri spiriti e che ad ognuna delle ferite di Cesare donerebbe una lingua così eloquente da spingere fin le pietre di Roma a sollevarsi, a rivoltarsi" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.240-243; as cited in Michele 2012, 06:28). This shows that even if Raponi's translation is the dominant source for the monologues, individual reenactors are at times eclectic and use various popular and easily accessible sources for their performance. It also shows that there is no strict standard that forbids the reenactors to do so, as long as their scripts do not jeopardize the general nature of the reenactment and its celebration of Caesar. On this note,

'Mark Antony's very last words were until 2019 some non-Shakespearean lines: "Friends, Romans, countrymen. My oration for the God Caesar ends here. May his name and his works remain imperishable in the minds and hearts of future generations until the sun, the sun shines on human woes". In the editions before 2019 the scene ended here.

By using the "friends, Romans, countrymen" form to end his monologue, the reenactor reestablishes the socio-cultural prestige of Shakespeare's monologue in the end of reenactment and uses it to send a symbolic message, a message that sees Caesar as a hero, benevolent and loved by the people, a man whose legacy will shine over and serve many generations to come. The very last part of the phrase, "until the sun, the sun shines on human woes" ("finchè il sole risplenderà sulle sciagure umane") is taken from the end of a poem entitled *Dei Sepolcri* (*Of the Graves*) from 1807, written by an Italian revolutionary and poet Ugo Foscolo. In the poem Foscolo writes about the importance of the tombstones as symbols that provide consolation, inspiration, testify to historical events and make death more bearable for the living. More importantly for the context of the commemoration of Caesar, the tombstones of great men inspire people "to great things, and make the world beautiful, a holy land to the pilgrims" (Foscolo 1807, 151-154). The poem ends with the aforementioned phrase that praises the greatest Trojan hero Hector for giving his life for his country, and stating that he will be honored by his tombstone until the sun shines on human woes (Foscolo 1807, 292-295). In this comparison Caesar is presented both

as a mythical and national hero, but also as much more, as a god. Therefore, even with this reference one can see how the reenactment is a celebration of Caesar and not of the conspirators' supposed democratic aspirations.

In 2019, however, after Foscolo's line 'Antony' finishes his monologue with a new addition, lines he did not say in previous editions of the reenactment. These lines are again taken from Antony's oration in Shakespeare's play: "were I Brutus, And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue In every wound of Caesar that should move The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.239-243). Even to these Shakespeare's lines, he adds new non-Shakespearean lines, saying that "the stones would scream vengeance, vengeance, vengeance", thus leaving the audience empathizing with 'Caesar' and not with the conspirators (NotizieRoma 2019, 31:30).

The scene is succeeded by a sad sound recording that depicts Caesar as an innocent victim again and celebrates him and his legacy (NotizieRoma 2018, 31:20; 2019, 32:00). In this way the reenactment ended in previous years. The oldest video recording that testimonies to the existence of this sound recording dates back to 2010 and shows that the recording and the structure of the reenactment have principally been the same ever since (thor2988, 2010f).

In 2019, while the sound recording is playing, the reenactment breaks off with Shakespeare's play again. Lictors come with a litter and put Caesar's body on it.

Dando-Collins mentions three slaves that took Caesar's body to the litter (Dando-Collins 2010, 94). They cover the body with a red purpur-like cloth and put golden laurel wreath on top of it. They take the body outside of the stage, in a small corner on the side, where Caesar changes his costume and on his place they put a mannequin. Reenactors get in line for the funeral procession, also not mentioned in Shakespeare's play.

5.3.1.5. Scene IV: funeral procession, Calpurnia's speech and a repetition of Brutus's and Mark Antony's orations

According to the historical sources, Caesar's funeral most probably happened on March 20th (Weinstock 1971, 350; Strauss 2017, 206), so the events between March 15th and March 20th have been left out of the reenactment (Dando-Collins 2010, 95, 105). As Dando-Collins points out, "the Forum was packed, shoulder - to - shoulder, with men and women who had come to pay their last respects to Julius Caesar" (Dando-Collins 2010, 122). According to Weinstock, the procession as such was luxurious, with people of different classes and functions taking part in it (Weinstock 1971, 350, 354). Weinstock reports about the funeral in great detail and his book on *Divus Julius* would be a great source for anybody striving for a historical reconstruction as reenactors seem to. In that respect they may have taken Antony's oration from Appian or Cassius Dio, and not Shakespeare (App. BC 2.20.143-147; as cited in Weinstock 1971, 352).

In the reenactment the order of the funeral procession is as follows: first goes the commander of '*Decima Legio*', followed by three 'common Roman women' playing the drums, then come 'Roman legionaries', three 'senators' carrying 'Caesar's life masks', two 'lictors', two 'Roman' women dressed in black wailing for the 'dead Caesar', 'Spurinna' with a square-like sign that states "C.IVLVS C.F CAESAR IMP. PM. COS V PP DICT. PERPETVO", a 'soldier' leading other eight 'legionaries' carrying 'Caesar's dead body' (a mannequin) on a litter covered with a red cloth and with a golden laurel wreath on top. The litter is flanked by four 'legionaries' carrying burning torches. The litter is followed by two 'standard bearers', 'senators' and 'common Roman citizens'. These are also flanked by 'soldiers' whose function was to separate the reenactors from the audience and to make sure that both groups get safely by the traffic (Longinuspileus, 2018, 5:00).

Possibly the most unusual item from today's perspective would be the life masks. However, as Strauss writes, in a funeral procession in ancient Rome there was "a family member or professional actor dressed in beeswax mask and costume to represent the deceased while others in the procession wore beeswax masks of famous ancestors of the deceased" (Strauss 2017, 206). The presence of the legionaries is also historically acceptable, as historical sources report that Caesar's body was escorted by "a very large number of armed men" (Strauss 2017, 209).

The procession goes from *Largo Argentina* (*Via di S. Nicola de' Cesarini*), through *Via delle Botteghe Oscure*, *Via di san Marco*, *Largo Enrico Berlinguer*, *Piazza di San Marco*, *Piazza Venezia*, *Via dei Fori Imperiali*. In *Via della Salara Vecchia* it descends to the Roman Forum and it stops at the temple of Caesar. The procession is not mentioned at all in Shakespeare's play. Historical sources report that after the assassination the crowd was frightened and then bewildered. They also report that conspirators tried to reassure the crowd that nobody else would die and that Caesar was killed for the sake of preserving democracy. Cicero, Nicolaus of Damascus (as cited in Toher 2017, 93), Cassius Dio mention the chaos made by the crowd and burning of Caesar's cadaver (Cic.Att.14.10; Cassius Dio, Hist.Rom. 44.20, 50-51; Plut.Caes.67.1-69.8; Plut.Brut.18-211; Suet.Jul.82-89). Cassius Dio is the only source that speaks directly that Antony brought Caesar's body to the Forum (Hist.Rom. 44.35.3). Suetonius mentions songs sung at the funeral games, but reenactors are not singing verses reported by him (Suet.Jul.84). According to Appian, Antony himself started to sing a hymn for Caesar (as cited in Weinstock 1971, 353). Weinstock reports about songs sung with the accompaniment of a flute, but there are no instruments of that kind in the reenactment (Weinstock 1971, 352-353).

Finally, some other events after the assassination reported by historical sources are not presented in the reenactment, both those before and after the funeral, such as the killing of the poet Cinna (presented also in Shakespeare's play,

Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.3), the meeting at the temple of Tellus, another meeting of the senate, the distribution of the provinces, honoring of the conspirators, or the funeral pyre itself. There is no herald appointed by Mark Antony to proclaim Caesar's newly appointed honours by the Senate. Finally, the chaos that followed, conspirators's escape from Rome, as well as all later events, are not reenacted (Plut.Brut.18.6-20.3; Plut.Caes.67.4-69.8; Suet.Jul.83-89; Hall 1922, 47-55; Weinstock 1971, 347).

Instead, while reenactors' 'funeral procession' is approaching the temple of Caesar at the Roman Forum, 'Calpurnia' performs a monologue (Longinuspileus 2018, 06:45; Longinuspileus 2019, 01:18). Her monologue is not based either on Shakespeare's play or on any historical source. Quite the contrary, it is completely fictional. 'Calpurnia' starts the monologue by complaining how Caesar ruined his expensive mantle, so expensive that only he can afford it in Rome. She smells the mantle and states how she loved the smell of Caesar's skin. 'Calpurnia' evokes the day when Cleopatra brought Caesar their alleged son and states that Caesar demonstrated her love towards his wife by taking Calpurnia's hand and going home with her instead of embracing Cleopatra and their son (Longinuspileus 2018, 06:48; 2019, 01:18-3:40; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 00:01). At the end of the monologue we learn that she is aware that Caesar is dead. She pretends to speak to her dead husband, asks the mantle to hug her, puts it over her shoulders, and walks away from the improvised stage.

After Calpurnia's monologue, the aforementioned speeches by 'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony' are performed again, this time, however, by different reenactors from GSR (Longinuspileus 2019, 04:20). Formally speaking, funeral orations were part of funerals in ancient Rome so in that sense these two Shakespearean orations are more acceptable here at the Forum than before at *Largo Argentina* (Strauss 2017, 206).

'Brutus's short speech is the same as the one at Largo Argentina, again based on Raponi's translation (Raponi 2000, 67-69; 2015, 156-160), besides some slight changes in the choice of few words (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 06:48). He skips a few lines in the very beginning of the monologue (Raponi 2000, 67; 2015, 156) and also mixes the sequence of words within Raponi's sentences (Longinuspileus 2019, 05:15), and the names in the monologue (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 05:38). Like other reenactors, he also adds a couple of prepositions and pronouns that don't exist in Raponi's script, and removes others. During his performance the reactions of 'Roman citizens' that listen to his monologue are much louder than at *Largo Argentina* even if they don't follow Shakespeare's script in detail but just cheer Brutus's name (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 07:20; Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.50-60). He also does not ask the 'citizens' precisely to let him leave alone or implores them to listen 'Mark Antony' to the end (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.61-67; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 09:00).

The reenactor who played 'Mark Antony' at the Forum, on the other hand, in previous years performed the role and the oration of Brutus. In the beginning of his speech, unlike 'Mark Antony' at *Largo Argentina*, he uses the imperative form and almost orders the audience to listen to him (Longinuspileus 2019, 06:10). Among all the translations, only Gassman uses the form that the reenactor utters (Michele 2012, 00:01). When stating that he is there to bury Caesar and not to praise him, 'Antony' uses a phrase similar to Gassman's and Praz's (as cited in Michele 2012, 00:01; Lonardo 2014; Praz 1993, 604). Soon again he uses another Gassman's term when he says that he comes to speak about dead Caesar: "Vengo a parlarvi di Cesare morto" (as cited in Michele 2010, 00:01, Lonardo 2014). All the translations are similar and 'Mark Antony' seems to reproduce Raponi's version, even if he doesn't follow it word for word. He simplifies the script, e.g. to emphasize 'Caesar' filling up the state treasury he translates Shakespeare's rhetorical question "Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?" (Folger Digital Texts n.d. 3.2.99) with a clumsy phrase "Ma è forse questa, ambizione?" (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 10:34). All Italian translations use different phrasing for this particular situation: "sembrò questo atto ambizioso in Cesare?" (Praz 1993, 604), "sembrò questo in Cesare ambizione di potere?" (Raponi 2000, 70; 2015, 162), "Poteva ritenersi ambiziosa questa condotta di Cesare?" (Giacomantonio 2011, 120 of 270), "Questa in Cesare è sembrata ambizione?" (Lombardo 2012, 129), "poté questo sembrare un atto d'ambizione?"

(Perosa 2015, Kindle position 1487 of 3808), “apparve questo, in Cesare, ambizioso?” (Serpieri 2016, Kindle position 2330 of 6326). Gassman doesn't say the phrase at all in his version of the monologue (as cited in Lonardo 2014). The closest translation is the one used by the dubbed Marlon Brando in the Italian version of Mankiewicz's film (“Fu questa ambizione?!”), a translation otherwise much more complex and lyrical than the reenactors' script (as cited in Mancini 2015, 04:30).

'Mark Antony' continues simplifying the script further. In this process, he skips a line that repeats that “Brutus says Caesar was ambitious, And Brutus is an honourable man” (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2.102-103). Like 'Brutus' before him, and like 'Mark Antony' at *Largo Argentina*, he mixes up the names from the script (Longinuspileus 2019, 05:50-13:50; Parco archeologico 2019, 09:20-20:55). In addition, similarly to 'citizens' behaviour during 'Brutus's speech, when 'Mark Antony' states that he needs to stop until his heart comes back to him, there is no discussion among 'the citizens' about what he has said, contrary to Shakespeare's play (Folger Digital Texts n.d. 3.2.115-117). Instead, they just encourage him to keep going (Longinuspileus 2019, 07:15; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 12:00).

Futhermore, for the first time in the history of this reenactment 'Mark Antony' shows 'Caesar's bloody mantle', his 'wounds' and reads 'Caesar's will' (Longinuspileus 2019, 8:30). His performance is obviously longer than previous

'Mark Antony's performances at Largo Argentina. It lasts almost 12 minutes and is the longest performance in the history of this GSR's reenactment (Longinuspileus 2019, 05:50-13:50; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 09:20-20:55). He doesn't use Gassman's or Foscolo's line to end the monologue but follows Shakespeare. At the end of his speech he shouts: "This! This! This was Caesar! When will someone like him come again?!" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2. 264). Like in Shakespeare's play he adds: "the fury has broken out. Take your road" (Folger Digital Texts 3.2.275-276). The 'citizens' shout a few times and then fall into silence. The people in the audience understand that this is the end and they start clapping. The reenactors clap with them. After this there is a short greeting by the vice president of GSR and the reenactment ends (Longinuspileus 2019, 14:20).

5.3.2. Ethnographic analysis

5.3.2.1. Positionality

On the occasion of my two participant-observer sessions in 2018 and in 2019 I had the chance to experience the reenactment of the Ides of March as one of the 'senators'. In 2018 I was assigned to the group of 'Caesar's supporters' and in 2019 I chose to be a member of the group that opposed 'Caesar'. I did that to get closer to the perspective of the other group of 'senators'. This strategy provided me with valuable insight into the so called 'backstage' area of the reenactment where I had the chance to verify how

reenactors prepare for the performance, how they feel and what it means for them (Goffman 1956, 69-70; Berto 2010a, 110; Tyson 2011, 63). In this way, the reenactment for me did not last 55 minutes like it did in 2017 when I attended the performance as an unobtrusive observer. Instead, in 2019 it started the night before the performance, when we had the last rehearsal, and it ended in late afternoon after the performance back at the headquarters of *GSR*, where we commented it. What is more, in 2018, in the evening after the performance there was a big dinner at the headquarters for all the reenactors. There we fraternized until very late in the evening, while enjoying the food and wine prepared together by reenactors themselves. During my different field work sessions, I attended these long group dinners on different occasions. They were great opportunities to immerse myself in their world and to learn about the reenactment of the Ides of March 44 BC from the inside. Moments like these, that included a kind of para-activities, were real ethnographic experiences valuable for my study of the reenactment. As one of the reenactors wrote on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides in 2010: “When we return to the headquarters [after the performance of the Ides], we go back into our modern clothes, knowing however that within us there is always a friend of ours dressed as an ancient Roman” (Angelini 2010, xvii).

Other activities that precede the performance of the reenactment were very important in a similar way, e.g.

dressing up for the performance at the 'senatorial *curia*', a little wooden cabin at the GSR's headquarters used by the 'senators'. The importance of these para-activities that precede the performance of the reenactment is evidenced also in a review of the reenactment of the Ides of March 44 BC from 2010, a review in which one of the reenactors wrote that "dressing up, taking off modern clothes and putting on 'stage costumes' gives, as if by magic, the feeling of a leap in time capable of transforming the Centocelle junkyard into CAIVS IVLIVS, or the employee of the Bank of Italy in MAGILLA, a sullen Optio" (Angelini 2010, xvii).

Both in 2018 and in 2019, when I participated in the performance, on these occasions reenactors discussed their clothing and paraphernalia, with judgmental and strict comments on what is historically acceptable or accurate, or as they say: *filologico* (field notes 2018, 2019). In these arguments they were addressing each other as if they were really Romans they were reenacting, e.g. a prominent 'senator' mocked 'Cato's appearance: "Look what you dressed Cato, you don't look like a senator! ". 'Cato' responded provocatively: "In my defense I can only say that I come from common people and I am not (sarcastically) a descendant of old noble and rich families like you are" (field notes 2018). One can see that appearance and status are tightly bound together even in the world of Roman reenactment. As Dennis Hall notes, to reenactors their clothing and paraphernalia substitute "a BMW and the Rolex", luxurious material things they

usually cannot have in 'real' life, and he calls this phenomenon "reenactor's fetishism of the commodified sign; [...] the trading of one simulacrum for another" (Hall 1994, 10). In fact, their clothing and paraphernalia are not inexpensive at all. As Longo writes, there are "expenses of several thousand euros for the purchase or manufacture of every single object and dress worn in processions and reenactments" (Longo 2012). This is why in both editions I participated in, the problem of jewelry 'senators' could put on themselves also came up. At both times a part of the 'senators' wanted to wear different rings, bracelets and necklaces, but the 'senator' in charge reproached them by saying that "if they wanted to be historically acceptable, they couldn't wear any of that jewelry" because it did not fit the era they were reenacting, the middle of 1st century BC. It is important to note that some 'senators' were insisting that they wear some jewelry, obviously because they wanted to dress up and look good in front of the audience. They did in the end, thus supporting Hall's comment (field notes 2018, 2019).

The same goes for tunics and togas they wear. The tunic and the toga I was assigned in 2018 were made of extremely thin, light and airy cotton. They made a very inadequate costume for cold and windy weather of 15 March in Rome. I was explained by a reenactor that my toga was not a *toga virilis*, which was all right by him because I was too young to be a Roman senator. That's why I was wearing a toga of a candidate, *toga candida*. In this

way, I may have been reenacting the son of Cassius, who was, according to Plutarch's description of Caesar's assassination, "conducted by the conspirators to the forum" on the day of Caesar's assassination, as he was supposed to receive his *toga virilis* that day (Plut. Brut. 14.3). This, however, was not specified by any of the reenactors.

Since I got incredibly cold in 2018, in 2019 I wanted to wear a white cotton t-shirt under the tunic, like I have seen some 'senators' do the year before. However, the main 'senator' gave me a stern look when he saw what I was putting on, and quite seriously asked me what I was doing. As I was young I was expected to withstand the cold, all in order to be more historically accurate. He even complained of reenactors who on other occasions wore tracksuit trousers that in the middle of a reenactment fell down and made them embarrass themselves in front of the audience. Other 'senators' were luckier than me, as their togas were made of heavy and warm raw linen that was very comfortable to wear in different weather conditions.

Regarding the issue of historical accuracy, in 2019 my long hair also created a problem. When I came for the last rehearsal on the night before the Ides, the main 'senator' stated seriously that I was "sure thinking about getting a hair cut before the performance" (field notes). I tried to make a joke by saying I was aware that with longer hair I looked more like a vestal virgin than a senator and since

other reenactors liked the joke I somehow managed to change the subject. My hairstyle induced quite a discussion and the 'main senator' objected to it several times. Another 'senator' commented that he actually got a haricut precisely and only because of the reenactment. Later in the evening the 'main senator' objected to 'Brutus's moustache, and in his defense the latter immediately pointed a finger to 'Mark Antony', who had a soul patch, a small beard just below the lower lip. In the end, the accused 'Brutus' shaved the moustache before the performance, but 'Mark Antony' didn't. This was not approved of by some 'senators' (field notes 2019). This points out to Hall's conclusions about reenactments, that the battle for historical accuracy is a battle for social prestige, enacted also through the way one looks (Hall 1994, 10).

Finally, when we were going to *Largo Argentina* for the performance on the day of the Ides, several reenactors were looking at me strangely as I was still wearing my blue Nike sneakers. In that way I was looking like a "farb", somebody "wearing a sloppy costume [...] hand-knitted chain mail and fight with a plastic sword" (Agnew 2004, 331). Farb supposedly stands for "far be it from authentic", but scholars have indirectly suggested that it may stand for a much less polite epithet (Scarpelli 2017, 207). The secretary of GSR also stated that it would be a problem if I went like that to the archeological site because journalists and tourists would immediately take photographs. However, as another reenactor was bringing footwear for me only to the

site, the president of GSR said it was OK for me to go there like that. However, quite a few people did give me weird looks until I changed to 'Roman' footwear. Even the footwear I got in the end provoked protests from the 'senator in charge' as it did not fit a Roman senator of the period (Field notes 2019). This all reminds of the reenactors' "Holy Grail", the priority of being as authentic and historically accurate as possible, something scholars have recognized as one the main characteristics or goals of reenactors (Agnew 2004, 331; Magelssen 2007, xiv; Gapps, 2009, 397; McCalman and Pickering, 2010b, 1, 6; Brædder, Esmark, Kruse, Nielsen, Warring 2017, 171, 172; Giancristofaro 2017, 125; Scarpelli 2017, 207). As one reenactor commented on the occasion of the performance of the Ides of March in 2010, "the departure to the place of the event is always a series of confusions. There's always something going wrong, someone falling from the clouds or some stupid comment" (Angelini 2010, xvii). In this case, it was me who got it the wrong way.

Furthermore, this aspiration for authenticity was supported before the performance itself by the fact that at the site there were around a dozen of experts from the association of the archeologists of the city of Rome – *Gruppo Archeologico Romano* (GAR). They placed an informative stand next to the site where they distributed free leaflets with information about the site. Some of their members were guiding tours of the site before and after the reenactment. This was done also in 2015, the last time the

reenactment was performed within the archeological site (Ingrao 2015). What is more, historical accuracy of the reenactment was insinuated also by the presence of Marina Mattei, the scientific director of archeological excavations at *Largo Argentina*, and Gianfranco Gazzetti, the president of the aforementioned GAR. They were interviewed for the audience by GSR's collaborators from *Imprenditori di sogni*. These interviews were conducted shortly before the beginning of the performance (field notes 2019). By having representatives of important institutions at their side gives more legitimacy to the reenactors, it strengthens the image of the reenactment as an endeavour at historical research and cultural mediation.

Finally, the importance of being as historically accurate as possible is suggested also by the fact that in the past the reenactment was performed at 11 o'clock in the morning, around the time when Caesar is believed to have been murdered (as cited in Horsfall, 1974, 197, 199; Ramsey 2000, 453; Woolf 2007, 8; archeologicavocidalpascato 2014; Terentius 2014a). This time is unfortunate for reenactors because the Ides of March very often fall on a week-day and both the majority of reenactors and the audience cannot be available in the morning for the performance because they need to be at work.

5.3.2.2. *Scene I: A Senate meeting from 49 BC*

In 2019, this aspiration for historical accuracy was compromised already in the beginning of the first scene, when we got on the stage. We were previously warned that

within the stage microphones that the main reenactors wore emitted the signal to the loudspeakers and anything we say would be heard by the audience. Therefore, without any precise instructions, I started talking with other 'senators' about the nature of the meeting, asking what we were about to discuss, and asking why we were summoned for the meeting. On the other hand, I found it strange that some 'senators' were just murmuring nonsensical and inarticulate sounds, so as to imitate the noise of the crowd in the Senate.

'Consul Lentulus', the first to speak after 'consul Marcellus' opened the meeting, was not so passionate and aggressive as the reenactor who was performing this role in 2018 and in years before. Some protests took place during the discussion about Caesar, but not too much. This contrasts previous years when reenactors were more expressive and where noticeable discomfort, confusion, disapproval, and quarrel took place (Immagini romane 2016, 05:00). On the other hand, 'Cato' is passionate as usually. He gets up, and as always, he points his finger in the air and swears histrionically "in the name of Jupiter Maximus" that he will condemn Caesar for his illegal enrichment if he returns to Rome without his army and as a private citizen (Immagini romane 2019, 01:16; Image 1). During the years, this gesture became somewhat of his own trademark.

Image 1. Cato swears histrionically “in the name of Jupiter Maximus” that he will condemn Caesar. Photo by Nicola Tumino.



'Mark Antony', who defends Caesar, also performs histrionically. He defends Caesar by saying he has always been “a faithful servant of the Republic”. He reports that Caesar only wants to save Rome from blood-spilling. In 2018, since I was on 'Caesar's side, I yelled with his other 'supporters' simply that “It's true! It's true! It is just!”. On the other hand, in 2019, following other 'Pompey's supporters', I fervently yelled that “This is a threat!”. My instructions were as simple as that. Nobody referred to any historical sources or a particular script when it comes to

what we were supposed to yell and how exactly we were supposed to react.

Overall the scene looks like a fight between what Donna Zuckerberg may describe as “old white men” (Zuckerberg 2019). In fact, one commentator of the video of the performance live streamed on the Facebook page of the Municipality of Rome warned jokingly one ‘senator’ to “watch his denture”, clearly alluding to the fact that the performers were senior men (Roma Capitale 2018c). In her book Zuckerberg writes that the discourse on Classics today is (still) dominated by white, senior, patriarchal, often angry, heterosexual men, and this seems to match onto the reenactment of the Ides (ibid.). All of these men seem to (try to) embody masculine stereotype: they are loud, they shout, they try to dominate the center of the stage and want literally to be heard when they speak. There are a lot of them and they all seem to have their own strong opinions on what is going on and what should happen. Even while fighting, the ‘senators’ pay attention to how they appear aesthetically, and all of them take care not to ruin the draperies of their togas and their visual appearance. They all hold their heads high thus imitating aristocratic, rich stereotype and in that way manifest their (desired) status. Simultaneously, their rage reminds us that these are not some feminized rich Romans, but ‘real’ manly men. Women are literally marginalized in the reenactment, as in all the three scenes they stand not on the stage but next to the stage, and except Calpurnia, they enact poor common Roman women who constantly try to beg

something from the senators and Caesar while they enter and exit the stage.

In the letter read by 'Mark Antony', 'Caesar' says he is not the enemy of the Republic and mentions everything he has done for Rome: "annexed vast territories, riches, tributes, and slaves, as a result of his conquests". This goes hand in hand with the aforementioned male stereotype. By now in the character, I reply (in 2019) that he selfishly did everything for himself only. In accordance with their usual script, 'Antony' states that what the senate is about to do against him is a real injustice. Those of us who oppose him, laugh and disagree with him. On one hand, the whole scene is characterized by histrionic male violence, and on another hand by passionless acting. Also the movements of the bodies of some reenactors are stiff and look unnatural and disorganized. This implies that the level of competence by different reenactors is not adequate or professional enough.

Image 2. Mark Antony presenting Caesar's case. Photo by Nicola Tumino.



5.3.2.3. Scene II: Caesar's assassination

I noticed this issue of professionalism in 2018 when we were waiting for the beginning of the second scene among the crowd in front of the stage. While the sound recording was announcing the scene, some reenactors were talking among themselves about non-related topics, some were saying hi to acquaintances, while the rest stayed seriously waiting for the next scene (field notes 2018).

Again in 2019, when we got to the stage for the beginning of the scene, in accordance with the scene and my character of a nameless senator who supported Pompey, I asked one

of the most prominent reenactors what were we supposed to discuss that day, pretending not to know why 'we' were summoned. I was shocked when he surprisingly silently replied: "What the fu*k do I know?". He started murmuring that we need to pretend to talk about anything, just to appear like we are 'really' talking. The reason of my shock was due to the fact that this was a reenactor who has been spending much of his daily life immersed in the world of Roman reenactment. Almost every day he has been posting his photos from their reenactments on his Facebook, accompanied by some short thoughts and phrases on the meaning of life (field notes 2019). Contrary to his reaction at that moment in the reenactment, this gave the impression that there was almost no separation between reenactment and his 'real' daily life and his quest for meaning in life. This is why his reaction shocked me so much. On the other hand, in the same moment another prominent reenactor was in his character and he was saying to me that it was "an important day", and that "something important was about to happen" (field notes 2019). These lines were obviously not taken directly from historical sources, but they evoked the importance of the conspiracy.

When the scene starts there is no much script in the scene, so in that sense there is no much to go wrong. However, mistakes in lines do happen at times. In example, in 2016 when Caesar mocks Spurrinna that the Ides of March have come, the latter responds: Yes, Spurrinna (instead of Yes, Caesar), the Ides of March have come, but they are not

finished” (Immagini romane 2016, 10:05). Also, after the assassination in 2018 one of the conspirators yells not that the “price of ambition was paid”, but mistakenly that the “people of ambition was paid”, and mistakes *people* for *price* - *popolo* for *prezzo* (NotizieRoma 2018, 18:35)

The crucial moment in the scene, the attack itself, is the most critical part. In 2018, when 'Cimber' pulls 'Caesar's toga violently, they are dragging themselves to the center of the stage, and their dragging lasts long 7 seconds. In the meanwhile other reenactors are just sitting on their benches and looking at the scene as if they were the audience. There is a also brief moment of pause before other reenactors start 'stabbing Caesar' (NotizieRoma 2018,17:47). In 2019 'Caesar' doesn't get away from his seat before they start stabbing him and what makes the assassination particularly unrealistic is the fact that the 'stabbed Caesar' walks from one side of the stage to the other and 'senators' who 'stab' him just wait for their turn at their place (NotizieRoma 2019, 17:28; Immagini romane 2019, 09:26). This clumsy choreography of the stabbing is visible also in previous editions, in 2014, 2015 and 2017 (Clemente 2014d, 02:21; Bianchi 2015, 01:24; ariveder lestelle 2017, 29:01). In 2012 'Caesar' is particularly surprised by 'Casca' who stabs him while he's sitting in his seat so the 'wounded Caesar's' walking among the senators looks even clumsier (Longinuspileus 2012, 08:01). Also, when 'Brutus' 'stabs' him (Image 3), everybody is silently staying at their place almost as if they were the audience, and not the conspirators. In 2016, on the other hand, the performance of

the assassination was more realistic in the sense that the 'conspirators' surrounded 'Caesar' immediately after 'Cimber' pulled his toga. 'Casca' promptly 'stabbed' him in the back, so the unskilled pacing around the stage was avoided (Immagini romane 2016, 11:06). Yet again, they enact old rich Romans, unskilled at any manual labor or physical ventures, so their clumsiness is 'justified' in that sense, even if it simultaneously compromises the not so subtle stereotype of male violence they overall portray. While 'Caesar' is getting 'killed', women are powerless and they stand in front of the stage, excluded from the action and the central performance. They are confused and ask each other what is going on and helplessly cry for Caesar. Their role is literally secondary.

Image 3. Brutus stabbing Caesar. 2019. Photo by Giovanni Mura.



5.3.2.4. *Scene III: the monologues*

Female passivity is continued also in the third scene. While 'Brutus' and 'Antony' deliver their Shakespearean orations, female reenactors somewhat clumsily stay outside the stage, physically marginalized, almost excluded from the performance, while men continue being men, those who are both the brain and the executioners of a 'great' plan. However, even their performance seems to be faulty at times. The impression of the lack of experience is given in the beginning of the next scene, when 'Brutus' pauses several times in the beginning of his speech (Immagini romane 2019, 10:56). He makes a couple of mistakes, e.g. he

tries to justify the assassination by asking rhetorically the 'citizens' if they would like "Caesar alive and them living like slaves" (Immagini romane 2019, 12:07). This contrasts Shakespeare, who writes that in that case they would not live, but "die like slaves" (Raponi 2015, 156; Folger Digital Texts 3.2.24-25)

He seems insecure and struggling with remembering his lines. The '*Largo Argentina* Brutus' is mild, gentle, more than 'Brutus' in previous years. The previous 'Brutus' was visceral, more passionate, louder, very angry at times. In 2018, for instance, he started the speech by shouting at 'Romans' and the audience in front of him, again embodying a powerful, carnal male stereotype. However, it is not credible that at such a tense moment of history Brutus would ever dare to shout at people who may make him pay for the assassination of Caesar with his own life (NotizieRoma 2018, 19:48).

Furthermore, 'Mark Antony' also makes several mistakes in his monologue. He mistakes verbs: when saying that Caesar has "payed his debt", he doesn't say *scontato la colpa* but *scantato*, that doesn't make any sense as it means "to make less naive, less awkward, to acquire confidence and malice" (Treccani n.d.). He also make mistakes with verb endings: "A sì piccola cosa sono dunque *ridotte i tuoi tronfi*" (Immagini romane 2019, 16:17; Folger Digital Texts 3.2164-166). He mistakes the number of a noun (uses singular instead of plural) and says "Romans, friends, *countryman*" (Immagini romane 2019, 16:40). He forgets words from

some lines, e.g. when saying that “the evil that men do is interred with those that are buried, the good often relived by others” - “Il male fatto giace con coloro che son' sepolti, il bene spesso dagli altri rivissuto” (Immagini romane 2019, 16:55; Folger Digital Texts 3.284-85). He mixes up names of Caesar and Brutus twice in the monologue (Immagini romane 2019, 17:10, 22:50). This is not really unexpected as the recordings from previous years show he did have some problems with the performance even before, e.g. in 2017 in the beginning of his speech he said that he “is not there to bury Caesar but to praise him” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 33:35) instead of saying that he “is there to bury Caesar, *not* to praise him” (Folger Digital Texts 3.283). In addition, other reenactors are just standing still while he is performing, and this looks unnatural. At the same time, his movements are unconvincing. He makes clumsy gestures with his arms. This is especially visible at the end of his monologue when he's awkwardly imitating the stones of Rome revolting and shattering (Immagini romane 2019, 23:20).

5.3.2.5. Scene IV: funeral procession, Calpurnia's speech and a repetition of Brutus's and Mark Antony's orations

After 'Antony' finishes, the audience starts clapping and a new sound recording starts: the music is sad, and it stimulates empathizing with Caesar. We get out of the stage, and four reenactors from GSR come with a stretcher where they put Caesar's body and cover it with a red toga and take him out. Plebeians cry unconvincingly. With the

help of a non-costumed secretary of *GSR*, reenactors put a big black cloth over the stretcher and 'Caesar' gets up and he changes his clothes. In his place a mannequin is put, and it is covered with a yellow and red cloth. One of the 'unnamed senators' also changed his costume for the part of 'Mark Antony', whom he was supposed to reenact later at the Roman Forum (Images 4 and 5). Then we all exit the archeological site and stand in line for the funeral procession. Again the line is organized by the secretary, who is very strict and decisive when instructing reenactors to be disciplined. During my different field work sessions I have seen how important she is in making sure that different logistical aspects run smoothly not only around the reenactment of the Ides of March, but also in the context of other reenactments of the association (field notes 2018, 2019).

While we were waiting for the start of the procession, a lot of people from the audience came to talk to us about the reenactment, the clothing and to take photographs. Just like on the occasion of other *GSR*'s reenactments I have attended, I have witnessed reenactors take pleasure in being photographed and admired and being in the center of attention. In fact, when we first got to the stage before the beginning of the reenactment both in 2018 and in 2019, I was somewhat surprised by the fact that they started taking photographs of themselves (field notes 2018, 2019). This pointed out to how important for them is to show themselves to the public, both physically and virtually, on social media.

When the procession starts, some reenactors serve as (traffic) wardens, to get people from walking on the street. In 2018, one prominent reenactor stood out as the biggest authority as he shouted at people to move from the street to the sidewalk, because of the traffic. He also shouted at reenactors to “be serious because they were in a funeral” (field notes 2018). The 'wardens' were taking care that tourists do not mix with the historical procession but stay on the sides or after us. Both in 2018 and in 2019 some of the 'wardens' would get caught in conversation about themes not related to the Ides and then they were reproached for not doing their duty. This speaks to the level of professionalism.

While the procession is coming near Caesar's temple at the Forum, 'Calpurnia' is performing her monologue. The procession actually does not reach the temple while she's doing the monologue. She is alone in the middle of a big space in front of the ruins of the temple, accompanied only by several 'wardens' and interested visitors of the archeological site, but the entire 'historical' procession stays far on the walking path until she completely finishes. Only when she turns to silence the procession comes to the new stage, and women then stand literally in the background of the stage. 'Calpurnia's script is unconvincing, as it was shown in the previous sub-chapter, but also her reenacting style. She does it fairly unskilfully and histrionically and, it seems somewhat comical. Although she is aware that 'her husband' just 'died', she is smiling in the beginning of her speech. The speech gets only a little bit more serious when

she starts lamenting Caesar. When she finishes, the 'legionaries' come and put the stretcher on the stone platform in front of the ruins of Caesar's temple. 'Brutus' climbs on the platform and holds his monologue (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 4:50). Peculiarly, only men climb the stage and the platform, while women always stay below, even 'Calpurnia', Caesar's wife, while performing the aforementioned monologue. Be it unintentional, it still leaves a disturbing image.

The new 'Brutus' is not the same reenactor that played 'Brutus' at *Largo Argentina*, but another prominent member of GSR. His performance is relatively calm, he doesn't raise his voice or shouts too much. However, he gesticulates with his arms relatively clumsily and one can see that he is not a professional actor. He also mixes his lines and pauses in the middle of some lines (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 05:35, 05:00-09:05, Folger Digital Texts 3.2.13-50). Several times he is interrupted by a person from the audience. One person yells to him that he is an assassin (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 05:28, 06:20). Available video recordings demonstrate that 'Brutus' was interrupted by a person from the audience also in 2018 and in 2016 and he was yelled at that he is an assassin, suggesting that even some people in the audience openly empathize with Caesar (Immagini romane 2016, 13:05; Longinuspileus 2018, 08:05, 2019, 05:01).

Image 4. Reenactors at the Forum. Mark Antony's funeral oration. Photo by Marco Ermili.



Image 5. Mark Antony's funeral oration at the Roman Forum. Photo by Giovanni Mura.



In comparison to 'Brutus', 'Mark Antony's performance is really exaggerated. It reminds of Gassman's interpretation of the monologue (Michele 2012, 00:01), but it seems like Gassman on steroids. For most of the monologue he shouts. This shouting is altered by histrionic crying. Among all the reenactors he moves his body the most while performing. Even on a small platform at the Forum he manages to turn around himself, crouch, and show 'Caesar's wounds' in an overly melodramatic way. He cries and yells too much. Especially at the end of the speech he seems as if he is shouting from the bottom of his lungs: "This! This! This was Caesar! When will someone like him come again?!" Like in Shakespeare's play he adds "the fury has broken out. Take your road" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 3.2275-276). The 'citizens' shout a few times and then fall into silence. For almost fifteen seconds after he finishes his speech there is an awkward silence before the audience starts clapping (Longinuspileus 2019, 13:45, 14:20; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 12:53). Even if both 'Brutus' and both 'Antonys' try to be as expressive as possible, they don't come near Marlon Brando's performance of the monologue in Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (1953).

The audience claps a lot and 'Brutus' gets back to the platform and thanks the audience. He emphasizes that they do not earn any money from reenactments, and he describes what GSR does, inviting them to come to the festivities of the anniversary of the *Birthday of Rome* (Parco archeologico 2019, 14:20). Money appears to be always present in the discourse about the reenactment. He also

says that they: “are [t]here because of the passion to valorize and to promote the history of Rome, to discover the archaeological sites, [...] [they] bring history in its place” (Longinuspileus 2019, 14:20; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 21:00). Then we posed for final shots for the reportage of the Italian national TV, *RAI*, that covered the event for their TV show “La vita in diretta” on their channel 1. We also took a photo with the crew of Facebook TV who covered the event. Reenactors again took photos with visitors at the Forum and then we exited the archeological park. The aforementioned issues, the motivation of the reenactors, their aims, passions, the role of money and the importance of the photographs will be analyzed in the following part of the chapter.

5.3.2.6. *Scene V: “Come Giulio Cesare” by Giulio Valentini*

In 2016 on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides of March, GSR advertised that after the performance, in the evening, there would be a conference on Julius Caesar organized at their headquarters (Iacomoni 2016a). However, there was no program, photographs or news from the event in the media, on their web pages or on social media, which implies that it did not happen in the end. In 2019, in the press release for the reenactment, a theatrical spectacle was announced to be performed in the evening after the reenactment, at “the suggestive setting of Nero's Arena” at the headquarters of GSR (Valentini 2019). The spectacle, entitled “*Come Giulio Cesare*” (*Like Julius Caesar*),

is authored by a Roman theatrical director and actor Giulio Valentini. The spectacle was canceled in the last minute without any notice. Later, in private correspondence with Valentini himself, I learnt only that the event was “postponed because it was difficult to connect it with the reenactment”. Similarly to the reenactment, this theatrical piece is again partly based on Shakespeare and is partly fictional. Like for reenactors, for its author this is also a historical endeavour, “a historical and theatrical story” as he frames it. On that note, after his performances, Valentini organizes discussions about Caesar with university professors (Valentini 2019; Bevione 2019).

On the other hand, after a closer look, Valentini's *Caesar* is nothing like the celebratory commemoration by GSR. His “literary cabaret” (Bevione 2019) is satirical and it mocks Caesar. He performs it in a cheap tunic bought on eBay (Bevione 2019). Also, most of Valentini's promotional video for the spectacle is shot while sitting on a toilet, that he even flushes at one point! He parodies Caesar in different ways. Among other things, Valentini states that Julius Caesar “must have thought about sex every 54 seconds” (Valentini 2017, 03:36). He presents Caesar as a ladies man, and for Valentini in the video this seems to be a compliment to Caesar. This is similar of ‘Calpurnia’s speech in the reenactment. However, what appears to disturb Valentini is Caesar’s supposed bisexuality. Valentini pronounces the whole phrase that marks Caesar as a “husband of all wives and wife of all husbands”

(Suet.Jul.52). This is problematic for Valentini who makes sure that his audience understands that in this respect he is not like Caesar at all and that “for sure, in any case, [Valentini always stays] very far away from husbands” or men in general, especially those that like other men (Valentini 2017, 04:55). When looking at the whole narrative around Valentini’s spectacle in parallel with the reenactment, it is understandable that GSR would not want to organize a performance of this kind of portrayal of the great Julius Caesar.

5.3.3. *Discourse analysis*

5.3.3.1. *Scene I: A Senate meeting from 49 BC*

The look at Valentini's spectacle introduces well the discourse analysis of the reenactment. The performance of the first scene is immediately preceded by two sound recordings: one presenting the association and the historical context, and another one presenting the scene to be performed (ariveder lestelle 2017). It is impossible to separate these recordings from the analysis of the scenes because they constitute an integral and indispensable part of the reenactment. They shape the narrative conveyed by the scenes. These recordings evoke the voice of authority similar to those of Hollywood's Roman historical films, where a narrator explains the historical context (while the spectators at the same time may see a map showing the geography of Rome's dominion), for instance in William

Wyler's *Ben-Hur* (1959), Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960), Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* (1963), or Antony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964). They evoke the sense of authority like the recordings in the films, and perhaps even more importantly, stimulate empathizing with Caesar.

This first paratext introduces Caesar as “one of the most illustrious personages of Rome [...] the great commander” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 6:00). The voice of Mariano Malavolta, a former associate professor of Roman history at the University of Rome Tor Vergata and the most active member of GSR's Scientific Committee, narrates the historical context and talks about Caesar in a celebratory way. Malavolta's recording states that “Caesar's patrician origin, the elegance of his manners and his aristocracy did not prevent him from becoming a strenuous defender of the common people”. So we hear that Caesar is rich, an aristocrat, but also a hero of the people, embodying thus different very attractive characteristics. Malavolta also enumerates quite a few Caesar's most prestigious political, military and social titles, without mentioning any controversial or negative aspects from Caesar's biography, and thus adds other desirable traits to his personage. He even praises Caesar's artistic talent. He says Caesar was “a military tribune, a building *quaestor*, *pontifex maximus*, a *praetor*, a consul, a *dictator*, as well as an unequalled orator and writer”. He adds that Caesar “expanded Roman frontiers all the way to the ocean and to the Rhine”. When talking about the historical context after the death of Marcus Licinius Crassus in 53 BC, Malavolta states that

“loved by his soldiers, Caesar became more and more popular with his policy favorable to the promotion of the poorer classes, contrary to Pompey, who joined the senatorial party headed by the most stubborn supporters of the oligarchy, ready to defend their own ancestral privileges to the extreme” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 08:10). Caesar is depicted as a perfect man, the defender of the poor, a real people's hero, or a democratic dictator, to paraphrase the title of Luciano Canfora's famous book on Caesar (Canfora 2007). On the other hand, in the very beginning of the reenactment, the conspirators are presented as bad guys. It is clear from the beginning that this is a celebration of Caesar.

What is more, the aforementioned description of Caesar reminds a lot of Gentile's depiction of Mussolini, who was considered to be similar to Julius Caesar: “statesman, a legislator, a philosopher, a writer, an artist, a universal genius but also a prophet, a messiah, an apostle, an infallible master, sent by God, elected by destiny and the bearer of destiny” (as cited in Dunnett 2006, 251). Mussolini himself wrote that he “love[d] Caesar. He was the only one who united in himself the will of the warrior and the genius of the wise man. In the end he was a philosopher, who contemplated everything *sub specie aeternitatis*. Yes, he loved glory, but his pride didn't divide him from humanity” (as cited in Nelis 2007, 406). Similarly to Mussolini, the sound recordings depict Caesar in a very humane and positive way. Even the *Imprenditori di sogni*, who collaborate on the preparation of the reenactment of

the Ides, refer to this historical event as “the fall of a God: Julius Caesar” (Imprenditori di sogni 2015).

“During the Ides of March,” according to the sound recording, “the association wants to commemorate the tragic events that led to the death of one of the most illustrious personages of Rome [...] the great commander massacred in the curia of Pompey” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 5:40). Even the choice of words – “one of the most illustrious personages”, “the great commander massacred”– suggests a kind of celebratory historical narrative we are getting here, portraying Caesar rather positively, while disregarding any and all controversies. Accordingly, in the advertisment for the event in 2019, the historical event has been described as a “bloody assassination of the great Roman soldier and politician” (GSR 2019a). This reminds of what Mussolini said for the Ides of March, that “the murder of Caesar was a disgrace for humanity” (as cited in Nelis 2007, 406) and reminds of the importance of the commemoration of the Ides under Fascism. According to Nelis, “Julius Caesar, and not Augustus, was always Mussolini’s favourite Roman” (Nelis 2007, 407). In fact, “in 1933, in [Mussolini’s] speech to the people of Rimini, Caesar, not Augustus, was portrayed as the founder of the Roman Empire” (as cited in Nelis 2007, 406). For Mussolini, Caesar was “the greatest man, after Christ” (as cited in Canfora 2009, 435). He identified himself with Caesar (Wyke 1999, 167) and was compared to Caesar by other people in his time (Wyke 1997, 100; 1999, 169, 170; 2004, 61; Dunnett 2006, 248, 249; Jossa 2013, 221).

As Emil Ludwig, who interviewed Mussolini, wrote: “For Caesar, and for him alone, Mussolini ha[d] a truly religious veneration”. He even made his own March to Rome as “his own crossing of the Rubicon (although making the Milan Rome trip by train)” as Nelis points out (Nelis 2014, 4).

One can also see that in the very beginning of the reenactment, in a very long, almost 4-minute recording, the audience is provided a reading of the historical event that celebrates and engrandizes Caesar and is very sympathetic towards him. This detailed tribute to Caesar is enhanced by affective music background. At the same time there is no argument whatsoever supporting any claims of his opposers who tried to stop Caesar's political and military strengthening, quite the contrary. This is very different from Shakespeare's play in itself and the audience gets only Caesar's side of the story. Again, not only the paratexts but also the use of Shakespeare's play evoke its use under Fascism. Fortunato writes that during Fascist era, “Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar was included in the middle school curriculum as part of the study of Roman history” (Fortunato 2018, 198). In a more general sense in this context, there is a similarity of treatment of Shakespeare's text as a part of a historical reconstruction also by the reenactors. What is more, these direct connections of ancient Romans and contemporary Italians is something else that latently connects Fascist (Melotti, 2015) and reenactors' approach to Roman history.

As Mussolini himself wrote on the Ides of March: “For the Italian people all is eternal and contemporary. For us it is as if Caesar was stabbed just yesterday. It is something proper to the Italian people, something which no other people have to the same extent” (as cited in Nelis 2007, 396). This is very similar to the words of professor Malavolta of GSR's Scientific Committee, who in a radio conference on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides in 2018 stated that these reenactments are reenactments of “the events that are part of the collective past of us Italians, reliving the Roman history through these occasions also means to penetrate a little into the ancestral memory of our memory as an Italian nation” (as cited in Carlone 2018, 15:00). Reenactors too in certain ways are „inculcating a new Italian identity and self-consciousness by constant reference to an idealised image of the Roman past“, something Nelis says for the Fascists (Nelis 2014, 11). In addition, even from a more inclusive and universalist point of view, for Mussolini Rome was “a collection of ideals”, as Nelis points out, and in that sense reenactors may be considered to have a similar approach (Nelis 2007, 402).

Finally, as reenactors' approach to Rome is mirrored in their reenactments, so is Fascists' approach mirrored in Fascist theatre. Fortunato points out that in this period “in all the critical introductions to the translations issued in the years of Fascism, the tyrannicide is called murder or assassination and Caesar is a hero not a tyrant, which makes Brutus an assassin, not a patriot” (Fortunato 2018, 199). This matches onto reenactors' presentation of the

event too. They never call the Ides the tyrannicide. In a sense, it could be said for the reenactment like for Nando Tamberlani's fascist version of the play from 1935, that it "attempted to neutralize the subversive potential of the text" as Marisa Sestito argued. Like in that staging, in the reenactment "Shakespeare's play becomes the tragedy not of Brutus but of Caesar" (as cited in Wyke 1999, 173). Even if this was the only staging of the play during the Fascist regime, as Fortunato points out, only "between 1924 and 1925 at least thirteen new translations of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar appeared in print throughout the Italian peninsula; at least forty editions, including new translations and reprints published during Mussolini's twenty-year rule, have survived" (Fortunato 2018, 197). This again shows how important Caesar and the Ides have been for Fascists. On a similar note, it could be said that the reenactment is "a three-act adulation of a conquering hero", something Maria Wyke says for Giovacchino Forzano's and Mussolini's play *Cesare* (Wyke 1999, 174). On a superficial level, the dramaturgical structure of the 3-scene core of the reenactment roughly corresponds to the structure of the play *Cesare*, in a sense that both works present Caesar in a positive manner and use their beginning to find reasons for his assassination in the senators' opposition to Caesar in 49 BC (De Benedictis 2014, 115). Both works also end with Caesar's assassination and both have Caesar as their "hero" (*ibid.*, 116). In a similar way, with regards to a celebratory and idealized narrative around Julius Caesar, there are Enrico Corradini's *Giulio*

Cesare. Drama in V atti (1902) and Enrico Guazzoni's *Caius Julius Caesar* (1914), both of the same period (Wyke 2006a, 170-178, Dunnett 2006). The reenactors' view of Julius Caesar and Roman history as their own (predecessors) matches onto fascist narratives represented in the aforementioned plays and film. Although they include more historical episodes preceding the Ides, the play and the film, like the reenactment, finish with Caesar's assassination, contrary to Shakespeare's play.

Even theatrical directors of the 20th and 21st centuries have recognized the connections between *Julius Caesar* and Fascism. Their works, however, are not celebrations of Caesar or Mussolini. Quite the contrary. Daniele Salvo thought of Mussolini as Julius Caesar in his adaptation of Shakespeare's play for the Silvano Toti's Globe Theatre in Rome in 2019 (Salvo 2019), something Orson Welles had famously done in 1937 (Wyke 1999, 178; Pelling 2006, 5).

5.3.3.2. *Scene II: Caesar's assassination*

The historical context preceding the second scene is again introduced by a long sound recording that doesn't appear in Shakespeare's play at all. Caesar is again represented very positively: as a winner in the Gaul and in the Civil War with Pompey, and his new prestigious honors are stated: "He had full control of the finances and the supreme command of the armies". The recording also adds that "this excessive accumulation of powers and errors made him odious to some powerful citizens and even to some of his friends [...] who understood how Caesar had transformed

the office of dictator in an absolute power of the monarchic type and depriving the senate of the power” (NotizieRoma 2018, 10:14). More importantly, even if it starts to seem that the recording may say something about how Caesar was a threat to democracy, Malavolta concludes by saying that “these men began to conspire against Caesar, recruiting other disgruntled to their cause, with the intention of saving the republic, but above all, to maintain their personal privileges and interests” (NotizieRoma 2018, 10:14). This is a very direct condemnation of the conspiracy that adds to the celebratory portrayal of Julius Caesar in the reenactment, represented in the first scene and similar to Fascist portrayal of Caesar.

In the beginning of the scene 'Caesar' enters the stage followed by 'lictors' carrying *fasces lictorii*, “the emblem of Fascism par excellence” (Dunnett 2006, 245). Dunnett points out how prominent this symbol was in Fascist Rome: “[they] appear[ed] on the Fascist badge and uniform, it could also be found on currency and stamps, on books and banners, on monuments and on the façades of public buildings” (*ibid.*). Nelis reminds that the lictors were so important that Fascism was even called “*culto del littorio*” (Nelis 2014, 2). The choice to portray lictors in the reenactment is unusual because there are no lictors in the source text for this scene, Shakespeare's play. These *fasces lictorii* are problematic in Italy because two thousand years after the Ides of March 44 BC they are often associated not with ancient Rome, but precisely with Mussolini and Fascist regime, whose main symbol they were. In fact,

media report that in 2019 the mayor of Rome “denied the support of Natale di Roma because the standards, eagles and *fasci* would remind of fascism” (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). Andrea Buccolini of the GSR complained to the journalists: “Those symbols are part of *our* traditions, of *our* history, and politics has nothing to do with it”, even if he admits that “the relationship with the various administrations has always been problematic because there is still that cultural prejudice that identifies Romanity as something nostalgic and belonging to the *Ventennio*” – the period of the Fascist regime (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). Even if reenactors appear if they want to ignore this relationship, it is impossible to look at the commemoration of Caesar's assassination without taking into consideration its importance in Fascist era, especially when 'lictors' stand in front of the stage.

5.3.3.3. *Scene III: the monologues*

Scene III of the reenactment in 2019 wasn't preceded by any sound recordings (NotizieRoma 2019, 18:25) to save time, because 'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony' have taken much more time than in previous years. In previous years, a sound recording that announced the scene stated that “Julius Caesar was supposed to turn 56 years. He suffered 23 stab wounds. The body of Caesar, at the behest of Mark Antony, was brought to the forum, transported by magistrates, covered with a sheet, so that the stabs received were clearly visible. The news quickly spread among the crowd that was moved and upset and came to the forum” (Immagini

romane 2016, 12:00; ariveder lestelle 2017, 30:00; NotizieRoma 2018, 18:45). Again reenactors miss the chance to present different interpretations of the motivation of the conspirators. Instead, they strengthen the image of Caesar as the victim by emphasizing the number of wounds he suffered. They also emphasize that common citizens loved their hero, Caesar, and were “moved and upset” by his assassination.

'Lictors' stay in front of the stage even during the third scene. Therefore, an indirect association to the Fascist regime stays even through the speeches of 'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony', and while the last sound recording one final time exalts Caesar (NotizieRoma 2018, 31:30). 'Lictors' presence doesn't correspond to Shakespeare's play and there is no historical source that testifies to their presence there. It would not have made any sense if in that situation Caesar's bodyguards had stayed in imminent danger from the assassins.

In a sad sound recording that succeeds the performance professor Malavolta underlines that “in this way one of the greatest and most illustrious men in history disappeared”, and in that way he reinforces the celebratory image of Caesar (NotizieRoma 2018, 31:30). This paratext again depicts Caesar as an innocent victim. The recording doesn't sum up the devastating aftermath of Caesar's assassination, but rather frames it as “the beginning of the imperial age”. At the same time it emphasizes the role and the legacy of Caesar by saying that “the political orders and the social

modifications remained fundamentally those made by Caesar and for centuries they carried the imprint he gave and it was in his honor that all the emperors carried the name of 'Caesar'" (thor2988, 2010f; NotizieRoma 2018, 31:20; 2019, 32:00). In some years this recorded paratext was read out loud by a reenactor from GSR (thor2988 2010f; Longinuspileus 2014, 8:00) and in this way the reenactment ended. Even in this paratext we can see how the reenactment has remained basically the same since 2010, when the first available video recordings are dated.

This is very similar to an even more engrandizing portrayal of Caesar, a *Eulogy to Caesar* written on the occasion of the GSR's reenactment of the Ides in 2010 by Gianmarino Colnago, the mayor of the town Aicurzio and a passionate collaborator of GSR. The eulogy is published on GSR's website (Colnago 2010). In it Colnago suggests that Caesar "headed straight for the goal, insensitive to Artemidorus' admonitions, mocking the haruspex Spurinna's warning. With one certainty in [his] soul: [he was] about to give history a new direction. Free from the burden of life, [he] put wings on [his] own REFORMATORY WILL that sprang up all over the empire. [Therefore,] after 2066 years, we celebrate and renew the IDES as an AUSPICIOUS day, that has immortalized IDEAS, WORKS, WRITINGS and the DEEDS of the greatest strategist in human history. Since then, in the 5 continents, [his] name has been appropriated to identify the highest concept of royal sovereignty: CESAR KAISER SHAH ZAR and modern LEADERS echo like

reflected light, the power of your name: GAJ.IUS JUL.IUS KAE.SAR” (Colnago 2010).⁵ Colnago seems to portray Caesar's death as his own sacrifice and emphasizes his legacy. In a similar way the president of GSR, Iacomoni, writes in articles on their website that the Ides were an “epochal moment” and a “milestone in the history of humanity” (Nerone 2018a, 2018b). Therefore, when looking

⁵ For Colnago, Caesar was “struck by the statue of Alexander the Great”, [...] and he continued where Alexander stopped, and has done more, he “freed up territories, with different and more complex geography, ethnicity, and culture, from three continents. For centuries the Celts, Germans, Slavs, together with Mediterraneans, North Africans and the peoples of Middle East drank: Law, Culture, Civic Sense of the great Works of Rome, Religious Tolerance and the Value of Ideals. [His] bequests produced the seeds that over the centuries formed the NATIONS of UNITED EUROPE and cultural affinities between the peoples of the MEDITERRANEAN BASIN. The seeds germinated in the homogeneous structure of the URBIS that induced the CIVILITY in all peoples. All this was in [his] will and it has come true. The modern reading of [Caesar's] deeds will be more and more shared, because it will flow from the inner soul of all the people of these lands. It will help us to free ourselves from mass stereotypes, seeking common purpose and ideals for a future ethics” (Colnago 2010). Colnago also “draw[s] attention to the monumental works that [Caesar] wanted and that today are HERITAGE of the HUMANITY. The Curia, the Forum, the Theatre of Marcellus, with the Basilica Julia and the temples of Mars Ultor and Venus [...] They have entered the imagination of every citizen of the world who is hungry for culture”. In the end of his eulogy he calls Caesar “ARTEFICE of humanistic liberation for the peoples” (Colnago 2010; capital letters by Colnago, translation by the author).

at the meanings of the scene itself in its relation to the paratexts, those by Malavolta, Colnago and Iacomoni, one can see how reenactors engrandize Caesar and present him as a visionary and a victim, and present the development of the Roman empire as his legacy.

Until 2017, there was no procession at all and after Mark Antony's speech, reenactors would place a laurel wreath next to the archeological site at Largo Argentina (Roma Capitale 2013a; Terentivs 2014a), "according to a tradition reserved for the great men of the fatherland" (Roma Capitale 2014) as the announcement of the reenactment at the official website of the City of Rome stated. However, it was Benito Mussolini who first asked the Romans to commemorate Caesar on that way. "Every year on the Ides of March you will take care to adorn with flowers the statue of the founder of the Empire" - with these words, as is shown in a Fascist newsreel from Istituto Luce from 15 March 1934, he instructed them to commemorate the anniversary of Caesar's assassination (Istituto Luce Cinecittà 2012b). He established this tradition not only in Rome, but in all the towns where he erected Caesar's statue (Wyke 1997, 170). Strangely, there is no mention of this in any of the texts or paratexts of *GSR*, who boasts that their reenactments are historical reconstructions. If so, such an important piece of information would need to be included in the reenactment.

5.3.3.4. Scene IV: funeral procession, Calpurnia's speech and a repetition of Brutus's and Mark Antony's orations

The problematic standards and 'lictors' take prominent positions in the procession. However, more symptomatic, in a sense, is the route the procession takes. It passes across *piazza Venezia*, flanked by the *Venezia* palace, famous for Mussolini's speeches and appearances, like that in front of thousands of Fascists on the occasion of the celebrations of *Natale di Roma* in 1938 or the declaration of war to Great Britain and France in 1940 (Istituto Luce Cinecittà 2012a, Archivio Luce 2018). On the other side is the Altar of the Fatherland, another symbol of national identity finished in the Fascist era. The procession goes through the *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, that was built by Mussolini. As Nelis writes, "the zone is divided by a large avenue stretching from what became the nerve centre of Fascist Italy, Palazzo Venezia with its iconic 'Mussolinian' balcony, running alongside various imperial forums, towards the quintessential symbol of ancient Rome, the Colosseum [...] with the focus clearly on the site's potential as a magnificent parade ground, rather than its immeasurable historical value" (Nelis 2014, 8). In some years, in front of Caesar's statue in *Via dei Fori Imperiali* 'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony' repeated their monologues, and reenactors placed a commemorative laurel wreath next to the statue of Caesar (fieldnotes 2017; Longinuspileus 2014, 10:50; Angelini 2010, xvii; thor2988, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f), a tradition established by Mussolini, as it was stated above (Istituto Luce Cinecittà 2012b). They place a laurel wreath next to

Caesar's statue in *Via dei Fori Imperiali* also during their famous "historical procession" at the celebration of the anniversary of the *Birthday of Rome* (Toce 2016), another festivity established in the 20th century by the Fascist regime (Melotti 2014, 2015). This festivity, characterized by a monumental 'historical' procession along the *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, will in 2020 be dedicated to Julius Caesar. In an interview on the occasion of the Ides of March in 2018, the vice president of GSR Carlone stated that their *Birthday of Rome* is the most important cultural event in Italy, and this reminds of the Fascist treatment of the anniversary of the foundation of Rome and its importance for the Fascist regime (Carlone 2018, 17:36).

Furthermore, the second part of the scene IV of the reenactment focuses on 'Calpurnia's monologue, that not only supports the portrayal of Caesar from the previous scenes, but also raises gender issues in the reenactment. In her monologue, 'Calpurnia' mentions the gossips about Caesar's infidelity, about him being "the husband of all the wives". This is a part of a phrase that Suetonius reports and that refers to Caesar's supposed bisexuality. It is important to note that one part of the phrase is missing, and it frames Caesar as "the wife of all the husbands" (Suet.Jul.52). One can see that the original phrase is manipulated, and Caesar is presented as a virile heteronormative conqueror. Besides his aristocracy, wealth, social prestige, political and military successes, Caesar's masculinity is anchored in promiscuous heterosexuality. The monologue is

controversial also because at the same time it depicts Caesar as a womanizer, lover and a loving husband.

This contrasts Valentini, who in the video trailer of his spectacle pronounces the whole phrase that describes Caesar as a “husband of all wives and wife of all husbands”. We see an uncomfortable-looking Valentini who makes it clear in the video that he is not homo- or bisexual: “for sure, in any case, [Valentini always stays] very far away from husbands” (Valentini 2017, 04:55).

This 'Calpurnia's monologue also points out the treatment of women in the reenactment. Even if there are female gladiators in GSR (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019), in this reenactment women have a marginal, passive role. Only in the sixteenth year of the performance of this reenactment a woman performed her own monologue. Besides 'Calpurnia', other women are playing only 'common Romans' who stay in front of the stage – almost as bystanders - and listen to what the “old white men” are talking about for around 50 minutes. What is more, in the beginning of the scenes, when 'senators' or 'Caesar' enter the stage, they try to touch them and beg them to help them. Other than that, the only role women are assigned is that of the mourners who cry for Caesar during the procession.

However, 'Calpurnia's short monologue is even more problematic than these roles of poor women, because in the monologue she doesn't have a problem with Caesar's infidelity and she nonetheless acts as if she was a naive

teenager fallen in love. This reminds of the 'beauty' contest entitled *Dea Roma* – The Goddess Rome – that GSR has been organizing for years. Even if they say that it is not “a real and proper beauty contest, but above all a contest for the incarnation of Romanity, [because] the girl who will win the contest in addition to other prizes, will have the honor to open the historical parade” (Buccolini 2017), the application form asks nothing more than bodily measures and the anagraphic data, with the discriminatory factor of being born on the territory of the former Roman empire (GSR 2020). Even the comments of the audience on a Facebook photo announcing the winner of the contest in 2019 demonstrate that it is all about the beauty (GSR 2019g). So in a sense it all comes down to “performing empresses and matronae”, as a title of one scholarly article on Roman reenactment states (Carlà-Uhink, Fiore 2016). What is more, even if there is a group of 'vestal virgins' within the association, in a way women are represented in GSR's sector of 'social anthropology' mostly with regards to clothing, footwear, cosmetics, jewelry and cooking (GSR n.d.e). This all contrasts a lot the characterization of women in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, especially the characterization of Portia, who is “stronger than [her] sex” (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 2.1.319). Obviously, it contrasts even more the characterization of Caesar in the reenactment itself.

5.3.3.5. Reenactment, para-texts and the portrayal of Caesar and the Ides

Celebratory and engrandizing portrayal of Caesar in the reenactment is mirrored in different para-texts. In the press release for the reenactment in 2018 Iacomoni has stated that the assassination of Caesar was a “tragic crime” (Nerone 2018b). In the press release in 2019 the reenactors write that “if one asks any historian, student, historiographer or politician, Gaius Julius Caesar is certainly one of the most important and influential men in the whole of history” (GSR 2019a).

This is very similar to what Oscar Damiani, one of the most prominent 'senators', writes in an article in GSR's magazine *Acta Bimestria* (Damiani 2011, vi). Reenactors devoted to Julius Caesar the two first issues of this magazine, as well as the sixth issue that marked its first anniversary (Tosti 2010a, II). In the article Damiani justifies Caesar and points out that he was ambitious “to give a new course to human history, tracing it, as far as possible, within the framework of legality and supported by a universal popular consensus that did justice to the quarrels that had characterized, with almost a century of bloody civil wars, the struggle between the oligarchic groups of the old republic, which had also realized the great conquests in the Mediterranean. Even the *Optimates* perceived the greatness of the project and for this reason they tried to hinder its realization by using Pompey, and finally resorting to murder” (Damiani 2011, vi, xiii).

What is more, Damiani is even more explicit in his praise for Caesar. He writes that “the great leader was the architect of memorable and even epochal events... It can be

said that a new course of history, a new world, was inaugurated by Caesar. The expansionist policy he implemented, not detached from the administrative structure of the conquered territories, on the Roman model allowed on the one hand the continuation of the Roman Empire for another four hundred years, and on the other hand made possible the formation of modern European states" (Damiani 2011, vi). The text mirrors well the sound recordings of the reenactment and points out the legacy of Caesar.

In the same text Damiani defends and celebrates Caesar in relation to the conspirators and their reasons for his assassination:

"After the battle of Munda, the main Caesar's opposers had been overwhelmed by the events of the civil war. Their ideas, their hatred of Caesar and personal grudge survived. The magnanimity shown, the forgiveness for the enemies, the great urban works, the reorganization of the provinces and the great programs of conquest were worth nothing to Caesar. All this was ignored by the conspirators, who indeed became more bitter as popular support for the dictator grew. Therefore they began to plot and proselytizing with the intent to kill Caesar. Unfortunately, even Caesar's closest friends joined in, as Cicero had hypothesized in unsuspected times, among which we can remember Decimus Junius Brutus, Trebonius, Marcus Junius Brutus and, who knows, perhaps even Antony. Caesar concentrated in his own hands immense powers: the repeated consulates; the title of emperor used as a forename, which was

then passed on to his successors; the title of father of the fatherland; the dictatorship for life, which in fact equated his power with a royal power” (Damiani 2011, xii).

This view is mirrored in the surveys I administered among the reenactors who participated in the Ides in 2018. I asked them if there was a historical person or an event from Roman history that inspired them particularly. Three reenactors playing senators responded that they were particularly inspired by Julius Caesar, and only one of them elaborated his response briefly by adding that Caesar was “an innovative man”. It is interesting to note that among these three, one was portraying a conspirator against Caesar. Three other respondents wrote that Caesar inspired them, one stated it was because he “conquered and defeated his enemies”, and another reenactor stated that he was inspired by Caesar because of his “determination to pursue his objectives”. Two other senators wrote that they were particularly inspired by the Ides of March, but did not explain their answers (Surveys 15.3.18.). If they were inspired by Caesar's assassination, the reason could be either because of 'Caesar's legacy, as represented in the upper paragraphs, or by the fact that with his death his dictatorship ended. However, the performance text and the para-text support strongly the first interpretation.

5.3.3.6. Claims to authority

In 2017 and 2018 the performance of the first scene was preceded by welcome speeches by the president and the

vice president of *GSR* who presented the association and the reenactment. The vice president in 2018 complained about the Roman Capitoline Superintendence for Cultural Heritage for not giving them the permission to perform the reenactment within the archeological site. This refusal, in his words, “mocks not only the reenactors, but all history lovers, scoffs at the *GSR*, who created a new mode of visiting, promoting and valorizing the archeological sites in the whole world” (Otto J 2018, 0:08). In a similar way he complained in 2017, stating that had it not been for the veto of the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage and had the reenactment been performed within the archeological site, it would have been able “to restore life, voice and dramatic relevance of the venerable relics of the Republican age” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 2:02). Even if in 2019 they were granted the permission to perform within the site itself, in the press release, reenactors have written in a similar way that “unfortunately, public cultural institutions do not give enough space to commemorate such an important event related to the City of Rome. But the re-enactors of the Gruppo Storico Romano take care to fill this gap” (*GSR* 2019a). One can see how through the years the association has been building up a narrative that puts it in the center of the process of safeguarding Roman heritage and revitalizing it. In the speeches and the press release reenactors claim authority and legitimacy for what they are doing. In the press release of the reenactment of the Ides of March in 2019 the founder and the president of *GSR* Sergio Iacomoni stated: “for more than twenty years now I have

been involved in disseminating and promoting cultural events dedicated to the history of Rome, I have travelled all over the world, hosted both by public and private institutions and, always, they have welcomed me as the symbol of a History that makes us recognize abroad as heirs of a myth. All this fills me with pride, it moves me, and my great dream is to share this love and these emotions with all the citizens of Rome and all those who feel that they belong to these stories (GSR 2019a). This protagonism has been evidenced early on in the history of GSR. In an interview the president of GSR gave to *The New York Times* twenty years ago on a similar topic. While talking about the emperor Nero, the journalist stated that Iacomoni “noted that many historians took a more revisionist view of Nero, but perhaps in a re-enactment of his predecessor's megalomania, he quickly added, 'Of course, I was the first, but now there are others who also defend Nero' (Stanley 2000).

This legitimacy and authority are supposedly corroborated by support of “many intellectuals, who see the reenactments as an asset of cultural tourism and an asset vital for the transmission of values to younger generations” as it was said in the speech of the vice president of GSR, before the performance in 2017 (ariveder lestelle 2017, 00:01). Some of these intellectuals with whose authority they are trying to connect their reenactments are Marina Mattei, the scientific director of the excavations at *Largo Argentina*, Gianfranco Gazzetti, the president of the association of Roman archeologists, and Mariano

Malavolta, the most prominent member of GSR's scientific committee. This is realized in 2019 by interviewing them at the site before the performance and by their participation at a press conference at the site a week before the performance in 2019. At the press conference Mattei emphasized that this reconstruction is done in a "correct, philological and precise way" (Iacomoni 2019c, 01:50). Again in her interview to Facebox TV before the start of the reenactment at Largo Argentina in 2019 she stated that "these scenes with augmented reality, philologically precise, i.e. based on sources, testimonies and archaeological remains, give us back a world through which we better understand the present" (Facebox TV 2019, 1:55). Even in 2015, Mattei has publicly stated that GSR's costumes are "philologically correct" (Radio Centro Musica 2015, 5:15). This is in part the reason why I almost froze while performing the reenactment as participant-observer in 2018. As I mentioned, they stated that I was too young to be a senator, so I needed to wear a *toga candida*. Unfortunately, this wasn't made of rough linen, but it consisted of a light and airy cotton (field notes 2018).

This historical correctness is something reenactors advertised in their press release and in different editions, the reenactment as a "strictly philological reconstruction" (GSR 2015a; Terentivs 2015; Iacomoni 2016a) or a "careful philological reconstruction" (Terentivs 2014a; GSR 2015b). In the press conference in 2019 Malavolta referred to the authenticity of the script and he explained how the rough draft of the reenactment that his university department

received for evaluation from GSR was in their view “optimally designed also from the point of view of the texts used” (Iacomoni 2019c, 4:40). Apparently, they did not see any disputable aspects looking from the historians' perspective. It is a part of a strategy that aims at branding GSR as “the oldest association of Roman re-enactment in Italy born from the passion for ancient Rome” as the sound recording at the beginning of the event states (ariveder lestelle 2017, 01:30). This devotion to ancient Rome is reiterated later on in the same recording, that describes GSR as “a cultural organization founded in 1994, constituted by members united by the passion for ancient Rome, whose purpose is to study and disseminate the customs and traditions of Roman civilization as well as to produce historical reconstructions to revive the spirit and emotions of ancient Rome” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 5:40). Along these lines the same recording states that the reenactment is “staged with serious scientific standards with the aim of spreading interest in experimental archaeology and to broaden the knowledge of customs and traditions of the ancient Romans, using methods of good dissemination, and, what is important, content previously submitted to the control of a scientific committee composed of university professors” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 01:00). According to data available on GSR's website, the committee members are two professors from the University Roma Tor Vergata, a researcher from the University Roma Tre, and a grammar school teacher (GSR n.d.a). According to the editor of *Acta Bimestria*, the committee was

established only in 2010, with the task to “supervise [their] research and articles so that they are more and more true and thorough from a historical point of view”. The article also states that “Prof. Mariano Malavolta and his wife, Prof. Maria Bonamente, agreed to be part of it immediately, and Prof. Anna Pasqualini, [was] dragged in this adventure by Prof. Malavolta (Tosti 2011, III). However, a document from 2019 signed by the president of GSR notes a change in the committee: the grammar school teacher was not listed as a member, instead there was a researcher of Topography from Tor Vergata (Iacomoni 2019d).

What is more, during my different research sessions I mostly saw professor Mariano Malavolta, who was present at all of their reenactments I attended, but also most of the times during their Thursday night group dinners that I attended several times. Malavolta is very important also in the context of conferences organized by GSR every year, usually on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the Birthday of Rome, which together with various book presentations and exhibitions, is another way GSR claims authority and authenticity for their reenactments. In 2018 I attended two such conferences, one organized in collaboration with the Order of the Engineers of the Province of Rome and with the University of Rome *La Sapienza* on the topic “Apollodorus, architect of the two emperors: Traian and Hadrian”, held at the conference area of the prestigious Museum of Trajan's Markets in Rome. The speakers were professor Malavolta, the vice president

of GSR, an engineer himself, and several professors from Roman universities. The day after, in the gazebo at Circus Maximus another conference was organized, this time on the emperor Hadrian and the *inclinatio imperii*, and the speakers were professor Malavolta and some members of GSR, who are not scholars by profession (Field notes 2018). This points out to a level of amateurism surrounding the reenactment.

Furthermore, reenactors try to legitimize the reenactment of the Ides by stating that it is developed “in collaboration with the Capitoline Superintendence and under the supervision of the Scientific Director of the archeological site itself and the Department of Historical, Philosophical, Social Sciences, Cultural Heritage and Territory of the University of Rome Tor Vergata” (Terentivs, 2014a, 2015; Ingrao 2015), as well as “under the supervision of the scientific director of the area” (Terentivs 2015). On that note, seriousness of their work is legitimized by protocols and cooperation agreements GSR signed with the aforementioned Department from the University of Rome Tor Vergata, with the Directorate General for Antiquities of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, as well as with the Department for Cultural Policies and Historic Centre and the Department for Educational, School, Family and Youth Policies of the city of Rome (Iacomoni, 2019d). Even the announcement on the web page of the City of Rome suggested in different years that the reenactment of the Ides of March is “realized under the supervision of the

Capitoline Superintendence and the Department of Historical, Philosophical and Social Sciences, Cultural Heritage and Territory of the University of Rome Tor Vergata” (Roma Capitale 2013a, 2016a), or that it is “the result of a careful philological reconstruction” carried under the supervision of the aforementioned bodies, as we have seen Mattei, Malavolta and the reenactors themselves state (Roma Capitale 2014). The legitimacy of the reenactment of the Ides of March is supported also by the fact that it was publicized on the website of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage (Giovanetti 2018) and on the website of the prestigious Archeological Park of Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palatine Hill, their collaborator in this project (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2018, 2019). Finally, even if the reenactment can be seen as a product of research only to some extent, it could be argued that it is thanks to GSR that the *Area Sacra di Largo di Torre Argentina* is famous for Julius Caesar and the reenactment of his assassination, and not only for the dozens of abandoned cats that have taken over the site since decades ago, as Ardis well points out (Ardis 2018, 321).

5.3.3.7. More on the relationship of the reenactment and politics

The aforementioned sub-chapter points out to the collaboration of GSR and important political and cultural institutions, and politicians, who in different ways supported their reenactments. These comprise also really high-profile institutions on regional, national and international level, such as the Presidency of the Council of

Ministers, that is the Italian government, the Region *Lazio*, the Province of Rome (as cited in Iacomoni 2019d), Spanish and Romanian Embassies in Rome (as cited in La Redazione de il Tabloid 2017), the Libraries of Rome (Iacomoni 2019d), the Regional Park of *Appia Antica*, and the Etruscan National Museum *Villa Giulia* in Rome (Mazzocco 2019). For instance, the press conference that marked the celebration of the 25th anniversary of GSR in 2019 was held at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament (Pupia News 2019). Politicians on local and national level have been supporting reenactments of GSR in different ways since years ago, e.g. by speaking at their conferences (as cited in CAT Comunicazione 2013, Pupia News 2019)⁶ or by taking part in the reenactments themselves (as cited in Corriere della Sera 2010; Il Tempo 2010). Reenactments of GSR have even been supported by different presidents of Italian Republic: Carlo Azeglio

⁶ At a press conference celebrating 20 years of GSR on 12 December 2013, speeches were held by Marco Scurria, then Italian representative at the European Parliament and member of the EP's Committee on Culture and Education; Michela Di Biase, councillor at the City Council in Rome, former president of the Commission on Culture, today member of the Council of the Region *Lazio*; member of the Italian Parliament Federico Mollicone, Group leader in Parliamentary Commission for Culture, Education, Sport and Science; Mino Dinoi, ex member of City Council of Rome, now national president of the European Association of Professionals and Businesses. It is not insignificant that the conference was held at the Information Office of the European Parliament in Italy and of the European Commission Representation in Italy. (CAT Comunicazione 2013).

Ciampi (as cited in Sofia 2018), Giorgio Napolitano (as cited in Terentivs 2014b), and current president Sergio Mattarella (as cited in Colnago 2017; Redazione Romadailynews 2019b). They have awarded 7 golden medals to GSR for the organization of the Birthday of Rome (Rossetti 2015), and 1 silver medal for their Historic-Didactic Museum of Roman Legionary (Quartieri 2015).

Furthermore, even though Melotti recognizes GSR's connections only to the mayor Alemanno (Melotti 2014, 2015), other Roman mayors have had connections with their reenactments. Although he didn't attend the event himself, the mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino “delegated in his place the Councillor for Public Works” to attend GSR's *Birthday of Rome* in 2015 (Tarani, 2015). The Municipality of Rome has also been advertising both the reenactment of Ides of March and the Birthday of Rome for years on their official web page and on official social media accounts, during the terms of mayors Alemanno, Marino, Tronca, and the current mayor Raggi (Roma Capitale 2013a, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c; Raggi 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The video recordings of the performance of the Ides were in 2018 and in 2019 later uploaded on the Municipality's YouTube account (NotizieRoma 2018, 2019). What is more, in 2018 a video of the performance of the reenactment of Ides of March was shared on mayor Raggi's own Facebook page (Raggi 2018a). Almost 127,000 thousands of users viewed the video and almost 2,400 persons reacted to the video of the

reenactment of the Ides on the official Facebook page of the city of Rome (Roma Capitale 2018c).

What is more, Raggi attended GSR's Birthday of Rome in 2018, and in a Facebook post she indirectly suggested that it was a celebration organized by the municipality. After people noticed and criticized this, the post was deleted, but it was caught and criticized in the media later on (La Redazione de La Postilla 2018). Raggi supported publicly GSR's reenactments on different occasions, by saying that they “want to bring Rome back to the splendor it had before” and she thanked them for helping “reconstruct a part of *our* identity and *our* roots” (Èliveromatv 2017). In her speech at the Birthday of Rome in 2018 she said she was “extremely proud to be [t]here [...] and [has] seen how much passion, care, meticulousness and, above all, study there is behind reenactments”. She awarded the president of GSR a golden medal coined by the City of Rome on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Italian constitution, and thanked the reenactors “from the heart” claiming that with their reenactments they “had the capacity to make [them] relive ancient Rome” (private video footage, field notes 2018). In addition, mayor's colleague from the centre-left populist party *Movimento 5 Stelle*, Eleonora Guadagno, the president of the Commission for Culture of the City of Rome, in 2019 invited “all those who in everyday life feel the pride and roots of Romanity” to attend the GSR's *Birthday of Rome* (Guadagno 2019).

Moreover, at the conference on Apollodorus of Damascus organized by GSR, Paolo Masini, former longtime Councillor of the City of Rome and special advisor to centre-left *Democratic Party's* Minister of Culture, mentioned the importance of taking the performance of Ides of March at the Roman Forum, and emphasized GSR's "love for Rome". Masini started his political career with, a leftist *Democratic Party of the Left* and later served within mayor Marino's centre-left *Democratic Party* administration (Masini n.d.). He also mentioned that "the logo of the Ministry is not accidentally placed next to this initiative" (private video footage, field notes 2018). Moreover, on the same occasion, Cinzia Guido, Councillor for Cultural Policies and Cultural Heritage at the First Municipality of Rome, that is, the city centre, and an ex-member of the *Democratic Party* stated that these initiatives of GSR were "crucial as they address the relationship of Romans today with *our identity*" (private video footage, field notes). The councillor stated that "even today in *our* way of speaking, dressing oneself, in some behaviors, there are traces of this past that seems so antique" and cultivating that via reenactment "allows *us* to reconnect and be within this historical path". For these reasons she stated to support and "believe in" activities of Gruppo Storico Romano (private video footage, field notes 2018).

This all emphasizes how high-profile connections with politicians GSR has, and how their network and influence is successfully developed in different parts of the political

spectrum. The local organization of the far-right political party *Fratelli d'Italia* in the center of Rome and one of the exponents of the party, today a member of the Italian parliament, Federico Mollicone, protested on Facebook already in 2017 against the decision of the municipality of Rome to deny GSR's request to perform the reenactment of the Ides of March 44BC within the archeological site at *Largo Argentina* (Mollicone 2017; Fratelli d'Italia Roma Centro 2017). Mollicone, a prominent member of the party, supported GSR's Ides of March again in 2019 with a particular Facebook post in which he wrote that “the Ides of March created by GSR are an example of high and popular culture together that interprets the innermost sentiments of Romanity. The re-enactment represents the perfect way to valorize our immense archaeological heritage. [...] I hope that the area of Largo Argentina can be reclassified as soon as possible so that the next Ides can be held there. Long live the re-enactment, long live GSR” (Mollicone 2019). This shows how the interpretation and understanding of the event and the reenactment of right-wing politicians matches onto those by GSR, and how tight their connection is.

What is more, one prominent reenactor from GSR is a member of the far-right *Brothers of Italy*, even if I have never seen him express any radical or politically incorrect attitudes. This member was several years ago proposed by GSR as a candidate on elections in Rome, on the ballot together with Alemanno. In an interview for a regional daily newspaper when asked why he decided to run with

that particular political party, he stated, as the newspaper *Il Quotidiano del Lazio* reports, that he did it because it was “a party that puts in the first place the pride of belonging and the sense of identity”, adding that “a nation without a past does not have a future, and thanks to this administration, to the mayor and the president of the City Commission for Culture, reenactment is being institutionalized” (*Il Quotidiano del Lazio*, 2013).

In late 2018 this party candidated the great-grandson of Benito Mussolini as one of their representatives on the elections for the European Parliament. This great-grandson carries the name Caio Giulio Cesare Mussolini (*Nomen omen!*). 'Caesar Mussolini' is a former military man, a Naval officer, and today a “representative in the Middle East of Finmeccanica, Italy's largest defence company” (*La Repubblica* 2019). When asked about his great-grandfather Benito, he stated scandalously that “there were a lot of good things and a few mistakes” (*ibid.*). So this sheds different light on the connections of GSR and this party, or on the fact that they donated 500€ to activities of GSR in 2017 (adnkronos, 2018).

5.3.3.8. Money

This points out to another important aspect of the reenactments, the money behind it. Before the start of the performance of the Ides of March, a sound recording states that GSR is a not-for-profit organization (arriveder lestelle 2017, 00:20). However, during my field work, I learnt that the yearly membership fee was 180€, that in a way makes

the participation inaccessible to the people who cannot afford it. What is more, *GSR* runs an internationally famous *Gladiator School*, where for two hours tourists can try a very mild version of a sort of a gladiatorial-like training. It is important to note that the price of this training on Trip Advisor starts from 138,60€ per person (Gladiator School of Rome 2019). Data from Google show that their Gladiator school is extremely popular (Iacomoni 2020a, 2020b). A table from mid-January 2020 showed that 433,204 people have viewed their Google page in the last 28 days (Iacomoni 2020b). Also, 70,965 persons have searched for it on Google (Iacomoni 2020a). Their official website has been visited by more than 94,000 only the last month of writing of this paragraph, and by almost 7,500,000 people so far (GSR n.d.b). Even their old website has had almost 164,000 visitors in the last month and more than 4,500,000 visitors so far (GSR n.d.c). Together with this goes the yearly number of around 10,000 visitors of *GSR*'s museum at their headquartes, where they have the aforementioned school (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). This all shows that there is some income going their way from their activities.

Their publicity is extremely successful. All the world's major media have reported about them, like The New York Times, Daily Mail, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, China Daily, some even 20 years ago (Stanley 2000; The Guardian 2000; Williams 2002; Newland 2007; Spolar 2008; China Daily 2017; Mancini 2019). The same goes for worlds' most popular TV stations and channels, like BBC, National Geographic, History Channel, ZDF, CNN, NHK -

Japanese National Television, some of whom supposedly even made documentaries in collaboration with them (as cited in Tosti 2010b, xiv; Iacomoni 2019d; BBC 2019). According to the reenactors, the reenactment of the Ides of March “over the years has aroused the interest of national media and TV, hosting newspapers and television from countries other than Italy, such as France, England, the United States and China”(GSR 2019a), who in this way offer a great and effective PR service free of charge. What is more, only on the Facebook page of BBC News a recent video reportage of the Gladiator School was visualized by 421,778 people (BBC News 2019). A lot of celebrities from Hollywood have visited the School and the museum. Ben Stiller, for instance, joked about his experience with his son from the Gladiator School at *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. Only a short video clip which shows this has been viewed on YouTube by 538,247 people, so one can see how effective their PR turns to be (Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon 2016). On the same note, recently they have been visited by famous Hollywood actor Manu Bennet, who starred as Crixus in the famous TV series *Spartacus* (Gruppo Storico Romano 2019e).

Furthermore, the vice president of the association Giancarlo Carlone mentioned that in comparison to Spain where the ticket for famous Roman reenactments at Tarragona, Carthagen and Rugo cost “around 25€, GSR does everything for free” (Grasso 2019). Even if on different occasions they have complained that the authorities do not help them financially in the organization and realization of

their reenactments, this is not completely true, at least it wasn't always like that. In 2014 Iacomoni has told the press that the year before the Municipality of Rome has contributed around 40,000€ to the organization of the *Birthday of Rome* (Di Placido 2014). Exponents of different associations of Roman reenactment from Rome have complained to the press that GSR had a sort of a monopoly on financial support of public bodies. As Longo reports, “in the first year of the mayor Alemanno 80 thousand euro seem to have been assigned [to GSR], 50 thousand in the following years. But if we think that the Municipality has allocated 15 thousand euro for the reenactment of the battle of Ponte Milvio, it seems to be a realistic calculation'. Another complaint concerns the latest '*Ludi Romani*', an event held at the beginning of September in the Appia Antica Park financed with 100 thousand euro (30 thousand from the tender of the *Estate Romana*, the rest came from the Chamber of Commerce” (Longo 2012, brackets by Longo). On the occasion of the Ides of March, they also sell little badges for 1€, and before the start of the performance this is always advertised (arriveder lestelle 2017, 03:15; field notes 2018, 2019).

In Longo's article people from other Roman reenactment associations have complained that “ever since center-right politicians have gone up to the Capitol, GSR organizes the most important events that take place in the Capital [...] GSR is tied with double thread with the Capitol”. They emphasize a “particular connection to a councillor of the First Municipality, elected with *La Destra* and now in the

PDL” (Longo, 2012). These were both conservative right-wing parties, the first advertising its “mission to be living the identity and national belonging” (La Destra 2007). Both parties, however, do not exist today under these names.

Therefore, it is not strange then that GSR has created an intensive PR campaign due to the decision of not funding the event of the *Birthday of Rome* by the Municipality of Rome (Redazione Roma.it 2019). Even famous Italian politicians have joined their cause or gave their support to the event around the same time, like Luca Bergamo, the The Deputy Mayor of Rome in charge of culture, Francesco Figliomeni, the president of the City Council of Rome, Sergio Mattarella, the president of Italy, and Antonio Tajani, then the President of the European Parliament and a member of Berlusconi's centre-right party *Forza Italia* (as cited in Redazione Romadailynews 2019a; Redazione Terzo binario 2019; Gruppo Storico Romano 2019c, 2019d; Meloni 2019; Iacomoni 2019d). Giorgia Meloni, the leader of a far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia – Brothers of Italy* – known for her xenophobic and politically incorrect statements, sarcastically criticized mayor Raggi for not supporting the event because of its Fascist connotations. She sarcastically commented the article which recognizes that “Raggi wants to deny support to the procession for Birthday of Rome because the standards, eagles and fasces would remind of fascism” (Meloni 2019; Barlozzari, Curridori 2019).

5.3.3.9. *Romans and identity today*

This all suggests just how important the reenactments of Roman history are for different kinds of people in Italy. As the vice president of GSR, Carlone, stated: “for us reenactors, to do the Ides of March is a very emotional thing” (Carlone 2018, 00:01). Scarpelli also emphasizes that “for the reenactors of ancient Rome, the idea of knowing better and staging a 'proper' past, towards which a high level of imaginative engagement is expressed” is very important (Scarpelli 2017, 202). The data also support this theory that they consider Roman past as their own: “April 21 [*Birthday of Rome*] is our festivity [...] we have realized that Rome is full of people with Roman pride, which must be restored”, stated the president of GSR in the press release for the Birthday of Rome in 2016 (Zorfini 2016). The press has interpreted this as a quest for “rediscovery of own roots” (Zorfini 2016). Even 10 years before that, the press has interpreted GSR's activities as “rediscovering the past and their roots” (Sansonetti 2007). Again in 2019 on the occasion of the Birthday of Rome, the reenactors stated in a promotional video that “the pride of feeling Roman is something you have inside you” (GSR 2019b). The press release of the reenactment of the Ides of March in 2019 continues the same discourse. There the president called the audience to join them to “remember how much Rome and its characters have determined and influenced our way of life, thinking and even loving of our times” (GSR 2019a). In a way, this somewhat reminds of Mussolini's speech “delivered some months before the March on Rome: Rome

is our point of departure and reference; it is our symbol or, if you wish, our myth. We dream of a Roman Italy, that is wise and strong, disciplined and imperial. Much of what was the immortal spirit of Rome, resurges in Fascism: Roman is the Lictor, Roman is our organization of combat, Roman is our pride and courage. *Civis Romanus sum*" (as cited in Nelis 2007, 403). In the same press release Iacomoni too talked of the Italians as "heirs of a myth" of Rome (GSR 2019a). Even professor Malavolta of their Scientific Committee stated in a radio conference on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides in 2018 that "the events that are part of the collective past of us Italians, reliving the Roman history through these occasions also means to penetrate a little into the ancestral memory of our memory as an Italian nation" (as cited in Carlone 2018, 15:00). This is not strange, as even Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1849 asked "the descendants of the ancient Romans [...] to constitute a Republic" (Wyke 1997, 45). As Maria Wyke argues, "after the unification of Italy in 1861, the problem of assimilating its disparate peoples into a single nation was summarized by Massimo d'Azeglio thus: 'We have made Italy: now we must make Italians'. Needing to justify itself historically, and in the face of continued opposition from the Vatican, the new secular body politic was able to find a major, and apparently self-evident, justification in the ancient civic virtues and military glories of the Roman republic and empire. The invented tradition of *romanità* gave to the heterogeneous Italians a piece of common national history, and, in an epidemic of literary production from unification

into the first decade of the twentieth century, historical fictions such as Pietro Cossa's Roman tragedies or Raffaello Giovagnoli's Roman novels attempted to supply a unifying popular culture" (Ibid.). This shows how the views similar to that of the reenactors have been expressed before by intellectuals and forefathers of the country.

Furthermore, another important evidence that proves how both reenactors connect Roman reenactment and Roman history with Italian national history comes from another enactment of the Ides of March, organized by GSR in cooperation with the Municipality of Rome on the occasion of the 2018 edition of the Birthday of Rome at the prestigious Capitoline Hill, on the square in front of the headquarters of the Municipality. In the evening of 21 April, GSR performed a kind of theatrical staging, somewhere between living history, *tableau vivant* and historical reenactment, an event where reenactors performed different scenes from Roman to contemporary Italian history, starting with the legend of the foundation of Rome and the Ides of March, accompanied by a narrator explaining these different episodes of Roman and Italian history, and choir performances of both classical music and music from Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* in intermissions. The choir itself was founded by one 'senator' from GSR, who also designed this concert in the beginning. This event, entitled symbolically *Aeterna Roma* was organized by GSR and the City of Rome as a gift to Roman people in order to celebrate *their* history. In one of the scenes there was an Italian soldier, also a reenactor from GSR, dressed in his

military uniform, marching in front of the audience with the Italian flag, and the performance ended with all reenactors (dressed in costumes) and audience singing Italian anthem. There were some tearful eyes visible in those particular moments. Here one can see once again how Julius Caesar, Ides of March and history of Rome are standing in the basis of Italian national history.

5.3.3.10. Motivation of the reenactors

This all directs a researcher to ask the question why the reenactors perform these reenactments at all, and is it (only) because they consider it to be their past. In the surveys I administered among the reenactors on 15 March 2018, four reenactors provided some notes to the statement that Ides of March inspired them particularly. They gave different explanations: one wrote that because of it he decided to become a member of GSR, another wrote that Ides of March inspired him because they marked an epochal turning point in the history of Rome, and one female reenactor wrote that during this reenactment one could feel great emotion (Surveys 15.3.18.). For one female reenactor ancient Rome represented “*our* origins and traditions” and her passion for ancient Rome came supposedly from the fact of “being born in Rome”. Another female reenactor wrote that while reenacting she feels “part of *our* history and origins of our culture”, and that for her to reenact a Roman person today means “to get to know these origins and understand who we are”. Even though Erika Berto wrote that “Roman reenacting is strengthening

of the historical identity”, these response demonstrate more that Roman reenacting is strengthening of one's own personal identity. For instance, another reenactor responded that his passion for ancient Rome comes from the fact that generations of his family come from Rome. Several other reenactors emphasized the fact that their passion came from a passion for the city they were born in or where they have been living (Surveys, 15.3.18.). As one of them wrote to me in personal correspondence, during the reenactment of the Ides one experiences “an indescribable emotion: to know that we placed our feet on those same stones where once Brutus, Cassius, Caesar, Antony, Decimus moved their steps. These characters still live in our city, they live in our memories, in our words and especially in those stones that yesterday we could touch. This thing excites me in an incredible way and I believe that it is only Rome around the world that can boast such a number of places, sites where this can happen, where these emotions can arise” (personal correspondence, March 2019).

Different reenactors report that participating in the Ides for them is a great emotional experience: 'Mark Antony' stated in an interview that doing the reenactment “it's always a beautiful emotion, a real transportation, reliving of those times, in short, being immersed in that atmosphere” (wwwc6tv 2011, 0:19; field notes, personal correspondence). This evokes a radio interview on the occasion of the Ides in 2018 in which the vice president of GSR stated that “during the parades of the Birthday of Rome [he has] seen foreign

reenactors with tears in their eyes” (Carlone 2018, 21:05). I can also testify to that as I have seen a reenactor with tears in his eyes during a reenactment in which ‘emperor Hadrian’ bestowed silver rings he himself made upon his loyal reenactors in 2018 (field notes April 2018).

Furthermore, one of the key reenactors and member of the management of GSR, when asked where his passion for ancient Rome came from, stated quite openly that he was born and raised abroad as a child of Italian immigrants, and in his childhood “the only connotation that could make somebody proud about being Italian was Roman history”. He complained about a lot of racism toward Italian people in the country he lived in. They, or rather he, as I was told, was mocked precisely because of his Italian origin, and “knowing a minimum of Roman history permitted [him] to be proud of being Italian and to have this great past” (PL2HNA_03). He also reported that later he became an engineer as he admired Roman constructing achievements and it “was a pleasure to retrace this history”. The same reenactor emphasized that with reenactment “one learns history, one learns his or her own roots” (PL2HNA_03). This is exemplified additionally by several responses to surveys: one senator, who feels “important” while reenacting, wrote that for him this kind of performance means “to reenact the past personally”, one wrote that what he liked the most about being a member of GSR was “the sense of belonging to Rome” and to reenact a Roman person today for him meant “not to forget *our* distant origins”. Similarly, another reenactor wrote that

while reenacting he feels like he “takes part in the history of Rome” (Surveys, 15.3.18.). This subjective engagement, or rather, identification with history, as various authors have pointed in different examples, is something that is not unusual in the reenactment world in general, regardless of the historical period that is reenacted. For instance, Fabio Dei, who studied historical reenactments in Tuscany, states that “the motivations of the protagonists of the historical festivities, from the first mayors of the post-war period to today's grassroots volunteers, hinge on love for their city and the pride of local belonging” (Savelli 2017, 73-74).

Sansonetti asked if they are “dedicat[ing] their free time to rediscovering the past and their roots [because of] Identity reflections? Desire to escape?” (Sansonetti 2007). Even if he didn't offer a response, he posed an important question that scholars have been dealing with for a while (Giancristofaro 2017, 122; Magelssen 2007, 129; Samida 2012, 212; 2014, 143; Samida, Liburkina 2014, 194-195; Carlà-Uhink, Fiore 2016, 200; Giancristofaro 2017, 279-280). Giancristofaro's field work on folklore in Abruzzo „highlight[ed] the importance, for the participants, of passive visualization, i.e. 'the satisfaction of being admired, photographed, recognized when parading' (Giancristofaro 2017, 122). This behaviour mirrors what Bassi terms as “new social configuration embedded into a society of the spectacle that encourages a narcissistic exhibition and spectacularization of the self, fueled by the unprecedented expansion of social networks and TV shows, a condition that has metastasized in Italy thanks to the long political

dominance of media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi (Bassi 2016, 190). The practice of taking hundreds and hundreds of photos during the reenactment and then meticulously and persistently posting them on Facebook is a sign of the phenomenon that Bassi, and even more Giancristofaro, talk about above. In that way the reenactment does not end at the archeological site, but spills all over the social network. Facebook is here very important because it gives them the chance to have a material trace of the reenactment, a constant reminder for the public, a place where they can perpetuate their Romanness on daily basis, and where people can admire them for it. The multitude of these photos that are posted on their Facebook accounts, page and groups demonstrate that these photos are not meant (only) for their private personal archives. Instead, they are something to brag about and show to as many people as possible.

Furthermore, other scholars mention other motives for participating in the reenactments, such as: “interest for history, desire to relive history, desire to share and communicate history, to acquire knowledge, to have fun and spend time, to meet people, desire to experiment, family reasons, the pleasure of dressing up, desire for role and identity change” (Samida 2014, 143). In the same article Samida lists other motives: “a) immediate experience; b) community experience/social togetherness, c) experience of nature/exoticism d) escapism/escape from the present; e) borderline experience; f) role change; g) fun and games, as well as h) mediation of knowledge” (Samida 2014, 142).

According to Rebecca Schneider, reenactors' "core motivations [are] a desire for simpler times and defined gender roles" (as cited in Johnson 2016, 33). Well, the millennial era of ancient Rome is definitely not a simpler time, however, the comment on gender roles is something to look into. As one of the 'gladiators' from GSR said in an interview, for him this is "a real 'lifestyle' because it 'teaches you to be brave in the arena as much as in everyday life' (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). So in that sense, the reenactment helps a person develop and maintain a traditional masculine stereotype in his everyday life. On that note, during an interview with one of the key actors from GSR, I was told almost the same reason for reenacting as Berto reported from an interview with an archeologist/reenactor: "the re-enactor told me that there is absolutely no real or complete reason other than the certainty that he feels truly at ease only when he dresses as an ancient Roman and precisely as a centurion; he cannot explain his choice, neither of the time, nor of the character: he only states that he feels within that role. Finally, he confesses to me that he has the same feeling as when he played with the soldiers at war as a child (Berto 2010a, 50).

In an interview he gave in 1994, the president of GSR Iacomoni said: "The idea came to my mind while I was watching the Swiss guards in the Vatican, always at the center of the photographic lenses of tourists. I said to myself: what is the image that a tourist from a faraway country associates with Rome= The Roman legionnaire with sword shield and helmet with broom crest, the

answer. Hence the idea of giving back to Rome its centuries". However, as the journalist notes later on in the same article, "at the end the would-be legionnaire confessed: 'what do you want, I work in a bank all day, these initiatives help me to feel young... and, I tell you, dressed as an ancient Roman I'm not bad at all'" (as cited in GSR 2019f). This points to Scarpelli's theory, according to which, "behind all this, of course, emerges the desire and pleasure of showing oneself 'dressed' and at work in front of those who share their passion. Which, incidentally, also recalls another important dimension of the phenomenon: the virtual one, in the spaces of meeting and sharing on the Internet (first of all, in our case, on Facebook) that duplicate, support and enhance the opportunities for socializing and building networks" (Scarpelli 2017, 197). Scarpelli too emphasizes the importance of Facebook as a platform and explains the phenomenon that is also present in the world of Roman reenactment. He notes how "when one dedicates oneself to it [the reenactment] with continuity and passion, the alter ego soon develops. And it is interesting to note how the re-enactment (or perhaps the *larping*) also bends the functioning of the social network to its logic. It is not uncommon, for a reenactor, to have a Facebook profile with one's own name and one with a fictitious name that one has decided to attribute to the 'social role' that one prefers to play. For example, a Latin name and a profile photo as a Roman centurion. I am also thinking of the case of a Roman couple who met at the Parco della Cellulosa, where they were in accurate Nazi

uniforms, but who also have Facebook profiles - each with a specific name and hints of imaginary biography - as Star Wars Universe characters (in particular, they are cosplayers of the imperial troops), or as a North American copy at the time of the war of secession" (Scarpelli 2017, 206). In this way during my research I have chatted via Facebook Messenger with different 'Roman emperors'. As the president Iacomoni has written in a sort of CV of the association, "a peculiarity of the members is the fact that each one, by becoming part of the GSR, assumes a Roman *nomen* by which he is known among the members" (Iacomoni 2019d). Berto reports the same strategy within another Roman reenactment group in Italy (Berto 2010a, 69).

One can see that some reasons are very personal. As *Vice* magazine reported about Paolo Zilli, one of the former senators, "his obsession with Roman history began at the age of nine, when he dressed as an ancient Roman for Carnevale, the Italian version of Halloween. His mom had sewn a tunic, and his dad had fashioned a sword with a wood shield. Since then, he's read hundreds of books on Roman history" (Chen 2016). This remark demonstrates well that ancient Rome was something the reenactors from Rome grew up with in many different ways. However, the interview discloses that "the former regional-level soccer player and black belt in karate says he only discovered this dream job, which combines physical exertion and historical nerdiness, only six years ago. 'When you fail as athlete, you have to recycle yourself', he says astutely" (Chen 2016).

Furthermore, on this note it is important to mention the president's speech before the start of the first scene in 2017, because it points out to another important function of the reenactment, besides its cultural function. In his short speech the president emphasized that "before being a nice reenactment association or whatever, *GSR* is an association of friends, and everybody is welcome if they want to visit them. It is not an association locked with chains, but an association open to everybody who want to express their passion and love for Rome" (arriveder lestelle 2017, 03:31). The importance of reenactments in terms of creating a social network for participants has been suggested by previous studies. For instance, Hunt reports a comment of a reenactor that his reenacting group for him "is (his) family. (He's) a single man but this all makes up for what (he hasn't) got" (as cited in Samida 2012, 217). Berto, who writes about Roman reenactors in Italy, points out well that, "the group represents for all a sort of family, in which to share moods, difficulties, emotions" (Berto 2010a, 84). In fact, as Iacomoni himself stated in an interview, "this place is like an alternative to the parish" (Rossetti 2015). Even more provocatively, during a press conference that celebrated the 25th anniversary of *GSR* at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament, Iacomoni stated that for him that was a "milestone that (he) couldn't reach either with his first wife or (his) second wife" (Pupia News 2019, 03:30).

5.3.3.11. Audience Reception

The press release of the reenactment of the Ides in 2019 states that “the event attracts thousands of enthusiasts [and it adds that] over the years, the event has aroused the interest of national media and television, hosting newspapers and television from countries, in addition to Italy, such as France, England, the United States and China” (GSR 2019a). Since I attended the performances in 2017, 2018 and 2019 I can testify that all the tourists who came across the reenactors definitely stayed to take photographs and to see what was going on, during the performance at Largo Argentina, during the procession, and at the Forum. However, I cannot say that I have seen more than several hundred people that were there at *Largo Argentina*. When it comes to TV coverage, there were two crews. At *Largo Argentina* France 24 TV took a statement from one of the audience members who said that this reenactment stimulated “an authentic sentiment, because one revives the epoche” (France TV 2019, 0:55). The previous subchapter did attest to the great attention GSR has received from great number of the most prestigious media houses in the world.

However, the best tool for analyzing the reception of the reenactment by the audience may be Facebook, that through its services offers the possibility of doing a useful sentiment analysis. Looking at the video recording of the performance of the reenactment from 2018, that was live streamed on the official Facebook page of the Municipality

of Rome, one can see how it was received by the public. A little less than 127 thousands of users viewed the video and almost 2,400 users reacted to it, while 1888 persons shared the video. There were 610 comments on the video (Roma Capitale 2018c). The reactions are as follows: 1932 persons liked the video, 357 persons loved the video, 79 persons used the reaction emoticon “wow”, 15 persons used the laughing „Ahah“, 7 persons used the sad „Sigh“, and 5 persons used the angry „Grrr“ (Roma Capitale 2018c). The video of the reenactment live streamed on the official Facebook page of the Municipality of Rome in 2019 was viewed by 42,314 persons. It was shared by 737 users and 798 users reacted to it: 628 liked the video, 136 loved it, 30 used “wow” emoticon, 3 used “Sigh”, and one person used the laughing “Ahah”. There were 140 comments of the video (Roma Capitale 2019a). The video of the performance at the Forum, live streamed by the Archeological Park of the Colosseum, Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill was visualized 15,797 times. It was shared by 273 users and 375 users reacted to it: 278 liked the video, 84 loved it, 10 used the “wow” emoticon, 2 used “Sigh”, and 1 person used the “Ahah”. There were 40 comments of the video (Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019). This all shows the reach of the reenactment and how well the performance was received. Users praised the performance by saying that it would be “useful also for the schools” (Roma Capitale, 2018c). Several users emphasized that “it would be great to see it performed actually within the archeological site” and the reenactors complained that they “were granted only

once ... we cleaned up the whole abandoned site visited by thousands of people for years and then ... the institutional nothingness" ... (Roma Capitale 2018c).

Some were "incredibly deeply moved" and have congratulated the city council and "Virginia" (Raggi, the mayor) for organizing this, as they believed (ibid.). Several commentators suggested that the reenactment should be performed at other public squares in the city center. The video of the performance motivated some users to show a sense of belonging to this historical event and love for Rome ("proud of our history", "our history!", Roma Capitale 2018c; "Caput mundi!!!! Rome I love you my immense love", "Thanks to those who keep the history alive!", "Great historical Roman Group, people - men and women with soul, heart and a huge passion - Loving Rome! Congratulations" Roma Capitale 2019a). In fact, even some non-Italian users exalted the reenactment as a demonstration of greatness of the Italian history and identity ("I'm not an Italian, but I tell you you must be proud of your country, Rome is the center of the world, the center of culture, the center of everything live ROME", Roma Capitale 2018c).

Looking at the comments, under all the three videos I have read only around a dozen negative comments that criticized the performance itself, and a dozen more or so didn't like the fact that they couldn't hear the reenactors well ("no audio no enjoy", Roma Capitale 2018c) or that the buses and tram were driving in the background

("Remarkable that in 44 B.C. there was already the Tramway", Roma Capitale 2018c). Several commentators complained about the bad camera angle. Some actually suggested improvements ("did you involve the proloco? next time set up the audioguides with at least an english-french translation", "Make them opportunities to attract tourism", "next time use microphones", "In Latin that would be the top", "it should be in latin!" Roma Capitale 2018c).

A dozen commentators actually stated that they didn't like the quality of the performance ("Kitch", "A little too awry", "very kitsch", "...the famous Roman socks...", "Whatever, with the moccasins, come on", Roma Capitale 2018c; "How sad to see a great Roman being represented like this", "Some of the costumes are positively medieval.", Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019). Among the negative comments there were people suspecting that the reenactment has been funded with public money, and they criticized the administration for this. However, reenactors from GSR promptly responded to any negative comments and whenever possible they emphasized that they were doing this at their "own expense for the last 23 years", without any public funds (Roma Capitale 2018c). It is peculiar that they want to emphasize that they have been doing it only with their own money when somebody is not 'attacking' them, for instance, for taking public money, but for the quality of their performance. At the same time, there was a large majority of users who lauded the performance.

Reenactors also reacted to around two dozen trolling attempts in 2018 that under the video started complaining about the holes on Roman roads that became a big problem precisely around that time (“you should reconstruct the roads instead of the assassination of Julius Caesar”, “think about the holes instead of acting”, Roma Capitale 2018c). Some commentators suspected that the public money that may have been used to fix poor roads in the city centre was used to fund the reenactment. On the other hand, there were users that actually defended the reenactors (“What do they have to do with the holes. That's what the administration should be thinking about, not a group of historical reenactors...”, “What the heck do they have to do with potholes...”, Roma Capitale 2018c). Others were just trolling the video: “Watch your denture”, wrote one user alluding to the fact that the performers were senior men. “Maybe Brutus will fix the holes this year!”, wrote another user on the issue of the holes in the roads. “I knew Caesar the doorman of via Clodia”, wrote another one. Some reenactors were expectedly irritated and rhetorically asked “what the holes have to do with the reenactment?”, however, always emphasizing that they didn’t receive any funds for the reenactment (Roma Capitale 2018c). The fact that there are people unaware of the existence of the reenactment and its characteristics, together with the reenactors’ repetitive replies to negative comments shows that there is still a gap between the reenactment and wider audience. This is definitely caused in part by the controversial pollitical allusions of the reenactment, and in

part also by “fake ancient soldiers” at the Colosseum, who “hassle tourists” for years and have thus been giving a rather bad image of the city internationally (Mancini 209). In fact, one user commented on the video that he thought “it were the ‘centurions’” (Roma Capitale 2018c). The Municipality has been trying to suppress the ‘centurions’s illegal activities for years, but it is a problem that yet has not been resolved.

As for the controversial political allusions, only several users focused on politics while commenting, however, in an unexpected way. One commentator wrote jokingly that “it’s always those from the Left who stab each other”. There were other, more disturbing not so subtle comments: “it’s not that anything changed a lot from then...”. Some were very explicit: “Today there is a need to see action!”, “Can I invite a few people? I think the role of Julius Caesar is still open in my cast party”, “Even you Brutus son .. Give us the Rome as it was” (Roma Capitale 2018c). One user praised the current municipal administration of the *Movimento Cinque Stelle*, implying that they are to be thanked for the reenactment, and the GSR replied again that they organized it at their own expense (Roma Capitale 2018c).

Some were exalting Rome: “Glory to Rome”, and many exalted Caesar: “Viva Cesare”. Few users criticized Caesar (“Caesar tirannus est”, Roma Capitale 2018c), and only one user cheered Pompey. Very few commentators focused on the historical background of the reenactment (“The Roman

Senate was much more numerous!", "Caesar was killed inside the Curia of Pompey because the premises of the Senate were being restored. The Pompeian Curia was a few dozen metres from the place where GSR recalled the event", Roma Capitale 2019a) or on the sources of the script ("They made a beautiful mix of Shakespeare and other poets, like Foscolo. They were great", Roma Capitale 2018c).

The Facebook data point out that significantly more people see the reenactment online than *in situ*. In fact, one of the commentators of the Facebook streaming wrote: "I think I can actually see better over the phone than I could live last year, so thank you" (Roma Capitale 2018c). What is more, a lot of people commented that the performance was not properly publicized, otherwise, they would have attended it ("What a pity! I'd have gone there if I'd known. Anyway, congratulations on the initiative", Roma Capitale 2018c).

The beginning of a video recording of the reenactment from 2017 from YouTube shows several hundreds of people in the audience and this is perhaps the biggest turnout in the last three years I attended the event (arriveder lestelle 2017). The data from Facebook then show how big a service to GSR the Municipality of Rome has been doing by live streaming the reenactment in the past couple of years and how that enables them to widen their reach greatly. Even if we are dealing with a global social network as a platform and a page followed by more than 400,000 Facebook users, this particular community

gathered around Rome's page is defined locally and is in that sense somewhat limited. This reach, therefore, includes the people who follow the page of the Municipality, and these seem to be predominantly citizens of Rome, or at least Italian ("Ciao from Cornovaglia", "hi have a good day from Sardegna bye", Roma Capitale 2018c), with some foreign tourists in addition ("Wish I was back in Rome today xxxx", "Bella Roma!! From Pennsylvania", "Vancouver, BC, Canada..", "saluti da NEW Bordentown, New Jersey", "Watching from Omaha, Nebraska U.S.", "My son is there & I am watching on my phone in Tallahassee, FL, USA! ♥♥Roma!", Roma Capitale 2018c; "Fantastic to see this performance live, bravo!!! Thank you!!! Cheers from Canada!", Roma Capitale 2019a). It is not strange that there are no big numbers of foreign tourists that follow the page as the page almost exclusively addresses the municipal issues on daily basis and refers to the citizens on daily basis. Also the comments were made almost exclusively in Italian, with a majority made in local dialect. A very small part were written in English, several comments were in Spanish ("Desde Buenos Aires, Argentina!", "Pero que bonito!!!!!!!!!!", "Estoy arrivando x vederlo maravilloso", "excelente. Felicitaciones por esta iniciativa", Roma Capitale 2018c). One user wrote in Portuguese ("Boa tarde obrigada", Roma Capitale 2018c), one in French ("Our boarding house. Was right next door", Roma Capitale 2019a) and one in Lithuanian ("All this has been done in Rome for just about 10 years, maybe even less. Caesar was burned maybe only this year. It started with the staging of

his murder. For tourists and artists, entertainment, and for patriotism, for the people of Rome, it is more important that buses do not catch fire and that rubbish is removed and holes are patched in the streets", my translation, Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019).

6. Case Study II: *Caesar Must Die*

6.1. Introduction

“On the day we shot the sequence of the killing of Caesar, we asked our dagger-armed actors to find the same killer urge within them. A second later we realized what we had just said and we wished we could withdraw our words. But that wasn’t necessary because they were the first ones to reckon the necessity to face reality” (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, as cited in Lormand 2012).

“Sometimes when Vittorio and Paolo said to me, ‘remember that he (Caesar) was a general, remember that he was noble’, I couldn’t get to grips with his violent nature. But all the men, all those who were plotting with me, Casca, Trebonius, Metellus, Decius, we were a real criminal organisation. A Camorra clan that decides to eliminate the boss because he eats alone” (Striano 2013, 7:48).

The latter is a recollection from Salvatore Striano, a convicted mobster turned actor, who played Brutus in the Tavianis' cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* staged by Fabio Cavalli in the high security section of the Roman prison Rebibbia. Both reflections show how the Ides of March were not some distant, unknown historical event for prison inmates who acted in the film. While working on the film, prisoners thought not only about the historical event, but also about the Ides of March of their own lives, that they all have experienced in a

similar way and that eventually brought them to prison. Therefore, this unique example of life convicts reenacting the Ides in a high security prison, the worldwide public impact of the film and the winning of many important international awards make it an appropriate case study. The chapter, then, aims to shed new light on the characteristics and cultural connotations of the reenactment of the Ides of March in the film, its influence on the actors, its public impact and reception. The chapter also compares this filmic representation of the Ides with the historical reenactment from the previous chapter.

Caesar Must Die is not a literary transposition of Shakespeare's play, but an appropriation of it. It is a feature film that comprises documentary footage of the theatrical staging of the play and fiction representing prisoners' everyday lives and rehearsals of the play. These fictitious parts that dominate the film have an "illusion-forming quality": they look like a documentary and, to paraphrase Rajewski, they trick the spectator to apply documentary-bound schemata (Rajewski 2005, 54, 57). Although for years the term adaptation was usually more common when referring to Shakespearean films, I see the film as appropriation rather than adaptation because I understand it similarly to Julie Sanders, who considers it "as having a greater distance from the so-called source than adaptations do" (as cited in Desmet and Iyengar 2015, 16). In a similar way the Tavianis have used Shakespeare's text for their own purposes. They confirmed this themselves when

saying they have “taken over, seized Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, dismembered and rebuilt it” (Lormand 2012). In comparison to the Tavianis, reenactors are more respectful of their Shakespearean source. They actually make much more use of keeping Shakespeare on his pedestal and thus benefiting from his cultural prestige, than by taking him down like the Tavianis do. They also don't have the leverage of renowned, award-winning film directors to be able to do that and get by with it.

The chapter first looks into what other scholars have written about the representation of the Ides in the film and into the implications of their writings for the analysis of the film in this present context. I'm interpreting what they have written in terms of how useful that is going to be for the present analyses. I also address what they haven't done but is necessary in order to understand the performances of the Ides from the perspective of issues of the historical reenactment and subjective engagement with Roman history. I also analyze the film in the context of 'prison Shakespeares'.

In order to parallel the previous analysis of the reenactment and to enrich understanding of it through this comparison, the first part is dedicated to the analysis of the film text and its key strategies, starting from the title of the film, the language used, the spatiality, the performance of gender roles, the narrative structure and its relation to Shakespeare's play and the reenactment, with particular attention on the representation of the Ides. Just like the

previous chapter, the second part of this chapter provides a mediated ethnography of the directors' and protagonists' take on the historical event and their participation in the reenactment of Caesar's assassination. The chapter looks at these things from the perspective of the issues of reenactment and subjectivity and it then compares these findings to those from the ethnographic study of the reenactment.

6.2. Literature review

The film received significant attention by scholars and a huge attention by the Italian public and international cinematic circles and media, who seemed as if they were competing who would praise the film more (e.g. Vistilli 2011; Prevosti 2012, Fusco 2012; Salvini 2012; Mattioni 2012; Ruggiero 2012; Sanna 2012; Escobar 2012). The Internet Movie Database alone lists 143 reviews written by film critics worldwide (IMDb n.d.a). The film received many reputed national and international awards, e.g. 5 *David di Donatello* awards in 2012 for the best sound, editing, screenplay, producer and director, *EuroCinema Hawaii Award* of the Hawaii International Film Festival in 2012 for the best film and best director, *Audience Award - Honorable Mention* at the Philadelphia Film Festival in 2012, just to name a few.

The film was shown worldwide, e.g. in Argentina, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, Uruguay, USA and Venezuela, not only after it's official release, but also quite recently. In late 2018

it was shown at the 9th Festival of the Italian Cinema in Brazil in São Paulo, as well as in Rome on the occasion of the retrospective of the Taviani Brothers at the National Cinematheque, and at the Rebibbia prison as a part of their cinema festival, where even the families of the directors participated at the screening together with actors (IMDb n.d.b; Fondazione CSC n.d.a, n.d.b; Centro Studi EMS n.d. a).

However, when writing about the film, very few scholars have focused on the assassination scene or recognized the dichotomy between the scene and the historical event it reenacts. In fact, only Bassi, who authors what is probably the best analysis of the film so far, seems to address this dichotomy directly. He notes the disproportion between the importance or, as he puts it, “the epic dimension” of the Ides of March, and “the small perimeters of the prison cells and courtyard” (Bassi 2016, 187). The organizational dimension of the film is especially important for understanding what role the performance of the Ides has because we don't see it on the (theater) stage but in a small dirty prison courtyard. It's embedded into the prison-house. Whereas in the real historical event much has changed after the assassination, at the end of the film when prisoners finish their performance they go back to their cells and Cosimo Rega says the famous line “Since I got to know art, this cell has become a prison”. There is a sense that the prisoners are not free and the film seems to reflect on the circumstances of the actors but also on the limits of

the assassination, the limits of drama. At the same time, even if it doesn't justify Caesar's assassination, the participation in the film helped the participants to change their way of life and to achieve liberty. So the film doesn't end with the film itself, and the performance of the assassination of Caesar in the film in a way has even positive consequences, very different than the assassination as represented in Shakespeare's play, in the reenactment and in the course of history. This dichotomy between the events is going to be interrogated throughout the chapter, and the ways in which prisoners-actors are able to recognize themselves within historical personages is going to be shown.

This points out to an aspect that has been recognized by scholars and critics: the seeming universality of the narrative of this historical event, already acknowledged within Shakespeare's play in III.I. when Cassius says the famous phrase: "How many ages hence Shall this our lofty scene be acted over In states unborn and accents yet unknown!". Prisoners' familiarity with the themes of murder, betrayal and conspiracy that constitute the Ides of March are among the main reasons why the Tavianis chose to stage *JC* and not some other play. As the citation at the beginning of the chapter shows, the directors instructed the prisoners "to find homicidal strength within themselves, searching and finding within their own memories unexpected parallels with events occurring in Shakespeare's ancient Rome" (Valentini 2016, 189). Valentini and Pucci recognize the prisoners' ability to

identify themselves with the narrative of the play (Valentini 2016, 188; Pucci 2016, 349) but, contrary to universal readings of the historical event, in this chapter I will argue that the Ides of March are considered by the directors and actors to be “an Italian story” and that the prisoners-actors identified themselves with the historical personages also for this reason. On the same note, looking at the performance of Caesar's assassination in the film and its relationship to the context of its social distribution and reception, I build on Bassi's analysis, but differently from it, I see the film as an expression of Italy's “collective unconscious” (Bassi 2016, 182) as highly attached to Julius Caesar and Roman history when it comes to its national and cultural identity. Therefore, I don't see Tavianis' Italy as a “refuge from the country's political and cultural impasse”, but rather as a proof of country's bondage to Caesar and Roman history (Bassi 2016, 17).

Futhermore, in their discussions of the assassination scene, scholars – like the Tavianis – focus on conspirators and not on Caesar. They buy into the Tavianis' reading of Caesar as a darker figure and, similarly to the directors, they question the effectiveness of the assassination rather than its legitimacy. Again the moral dilemma, whether it is right or not to kill anyone, even a tyrant, is left unexplored, and this question is crucial for understanding the reading of the historical event the film appears to provide and for its comparison with the historical reenactment. In scholarly interpretations of the assassination scene, the fact that the prisoners convicted for related crimes are enacting Caesar's

murder completely dominates the discussions, and the contemporary aspect of the film prevails, perhaps unjustly, over the historical narrative, put in the background in these analyses. However, these discussions do not go further than recognizing that it's paradoxical that this enactment should ever result in freedom as the people who are performing it are locked up in prison (Palanti 2014, 71, 76-77; Valentini 2016, 191; Calbi 2014, 246). However, this is not correct because, as it will be elaborated later on, reenacting Caesar's assassination in the film had a cathartic effect on prisoners and led some of them to change their lives.

Additionally, Calbi calls the assassination of Caesar in the film "a bloody execution of a tyrant", but there is no simulation of blood anywhere in the film (Calbi 2014, 246). Quite the contrary, the directors used "the blood in prisoners' eyes and not blood on Caesar's body" (Caesar Must Die, DVD Interviews, 2013). Contrary to the bulk of blood in Shakespeare's play or the tradition of Renaissance plays that could often be quite gory, the fact that the film does not show blood is significant as it doesn't compromise the spectators' empathy with the prisoners-conspirators. In this way, they avoid the depiction of the conspirators as butchers and instead they maintain the image of idealists. This contrasts the historical reenactment too, where the celebration of Caesar is enhanced by literalizing the play and by showing blood stains on a cloth covering his body that stimulate in audience an emotional response – the

audience is supposed to agree with reenactors' perspective. The question of showing blood is peculiar also in other productions, because Rob Melrose's adaptation of the play that evokes Barack Obama does not show blood, most probably to avoid the gigantic scandal that for exactly these reasons caught up with Oskar Eustis' staging (Mihanovic 2020, 13).

What is more, another issue at stake here is the political reading of the staging of the assassination and its placement within the political framework of the Tavianis' opus. The necessity of looking at the film in a larger political context is suggested indirectly by Bassi, who points out that "the sacrificial murder of Caesar, shot in a very stylized matter, echoes the mythical and ritual representation of history that the Tavianis famously employed in *The Night of the Shooting Stars* (1982), in their transfiguration of the Italian anti-Nazi Resistance as a Homeric battle" (Bassi 2016, 188). Bassi understands the Tavianis' killing of Caesar conservatively, as presented as a sacrifice done to save the Roman Republic - even though ineffective in the end - but he does not discuss neither the assassination in detail nor the sacrificial attitude of Brutus, Cassius and other conspirators-prisoners, although they are the key to reading the Tavianis' perspective on the historical event and its representation on screen. By starting the film with Brutus' sacrificial suicide and by ending it with two suicides, first by Cassius and then again by Brutus, the Tavianis reinforce the idea they advocate in the

film – understanding of conspirators as idealists and liberators and Caesar as the tyrant. Although they question more the effectiveness than the legitimacy or the moral justification of the assassination, the directors depict conspirators who view the assassination as an inevitable sacrifice. This points out to the fact that the film is more interested in Brutus figure than in the Caesar figure, being therefore quite different from the historical reenactment, despite using the same source.

What is more, there is another layer to the political reading of the assassination scene, pertaining to the presentation of Caesar as a personification of the Italian prison system itself, and therefore, the assassination of Caesar as a critique of the legal organization of and the living conditions within this system. This is recognized by Calbi and Tempera, who unfortunately do not use this to position the film within Taviani's cinematic opus and their ideological and political perspective (Calbi 2014, 246; Tempera 2017, 273-274). This is going to be done in the chapter as it is important for understanding the directors' reading of the historical event.

Furthermore, the language spoken by prisoners in the film evokes another layer to the film as a political critique. Namely, the prisoners speak in dialects, and they use the terminology and expressions that remind of the language of Italian criminal organizations. As Calbi points out, “the language of Mafia culture informs the whole film” (Calbi

2014, 242) – both the scenes from Shakespeare's play and the scenes that break away from Shakespeare's text – and with this kind of language the directors refer to prisoners' previous or even present lives. In fact, the directors have stated that almost all of their actors belonged to these criminal organizations (Catelli 2012; Morgoglione 2012). This kind of language also suggests that in the world of Italian organized crime the Ides of March happen even today, where criminals plot against each other and they “kill the boss”, as one of the prisoners said in the film, to safeguard their own interests (Caesar Must Die 2013, 25:25). For Bassi, on the other hand, this language is a sign of “reinscription of the narrative in a reassuringly national tradition that deflects the pressures of globalization” (Bassi 2016, 197), and, building on Bassi's view, it will be very important later in the chapter to look at the film as a signifier of a perhaps fractured national cultural identity, in order to compare it to the reenactment.

Moreover, the language used in the film is important also because it facilitates a cathartic effect of the film making process on the prisoners (Valentini 2016, 188; Nappi 2014, 45), and is important for identification of prisoners-actors with the characters and historical personages. Dialects, urban slang and strong local accents characterize the film, and mentioning the cathartic experience became a trope in writing about the film. Even the protagonists themselves – Salvatore Striano (Brutus), Antonio Frasca (Mark Antony) and Cosimo Rega (Cassius) - mentioned it various times

(aiutoaiutocom 2012, 0:10; Rega 2017, 473; Escobar 2012; Sorrentini 2012; Morgoglione 2012; Di Fabio 2015, 162-165, 169; Bassi 2016, 186, 199-200; Pérez and Bevilacqua 2016). The consequence of this cathartic experience is the fact that among 518 of Cavalli's prison-actors, only 12 of them returned to crime later (Di Fabio, 2015, 169). This is lower even from the ratio of the famous Shakespeare Behind Bars programme, that has a 6% recidivism rate (Shakespeare Behind Bars n.d.). In the chapter I critically compare the linguistic aspect of the film with the language reenactors use in their performances. I will shed light on reasons behind similarities and differences in the language in these two cases.

Finally, one of important issues is also the relationship of the film with the source text, Shakespeare's tragedy. This is closely connected to the issue of the film's genre. Some scholars and film critics think the film is a documentary (Corso n.d., Filmtv n.d., Shoji 2013). Others call it docu-fiction (Calbi 2014, 235; Nappi 2014, 31, 33; Pérez, Bevilacqua 2016). Balázs understands the film as a mixture between an adaptation and appropriation (Balázs 2014). In the chapter I will argue that the film is a dramatization and an appropriation of both the source text, Shakespeare's play, and the everyday life of prisoners who participate in the work of their theatrical group. Although the term "adaptation became prominent because of its use in film studies" (Desmet, Iyengar 2015, 11), I perceive the film as an appropriation. Still, I recognize the nuances and limitations of this term, as described by Desmet and

Iyengar (2015). As the participation in the performance of the Ides of March has a particular effect on prisoners' lives, this makes it an illuminating comparative case for enriching the understanding of reenactors' relationship with the historical event. This triangulation between Shakespeare's text, the totality of the film and the historical reenactment is going to be employed throughout the chapter, in order to shed light on the consequences and meanings of different appropriation choices in different performances.

One can see that scholars so far have not looked into the relationship of the film with the actual historical event. The directors' and actors' views on the historical event, Caesar's behavior and conspirators' motifs have been overlooked, although there is plenty of data available besides the film text itself, starting with protagonists' autobiographies and multitude of recordings of public appearances and interviews given by the directors and actors, as well as prolific reception by film critics around the world. Scholars seem not to have looked closely at contemporary political implications of the representation of the Ides in the film in relation to Tavianis' previous work or their political affiliation. Even the relationship of the film text and the emblematic title of the film is generally overlooked, except in one analysis of the film (Mancino 2012). It is indispensable to look closely at these elements in order to understand what kind of message and what kind of

reading of the historical narrative about the Ides of March the film appears to provide.

Finally, the chapter critically compares the presentation of the Ides in the film and in the historical reenactment in order to reveal differences and similarities in understanding and representation of the historical event, but also with regards to their political views, characteristics of the mise-en-scene and, perhaps most importantly, their impact on the participants.

6.3. Shakespeare behind bars: the film as a 'prison Shakespeare'

The film formally falls under the category of "prison Shakespeare" and although it is a feature film that seems to be presenting much more different stages in the preparation of the play and only very few moments of the actual performance of the theatrical staging, the film needs to be analysed also in this context (Thompson 1998; Scott-Douglass 2007; Shailor 2011). One very famous 'prison Shakespeare' is Phyllida Lloyd's acclaimed theatrical staging of *Julius Caesar* at Donmar Warehouse and its cinematic adaptation. Unlike the Tavianis' feature film, Lloyd's film shows only the footage of the actual theatrical performance of the play performed on the theater stage. On the other hand, in Lloyd's adaptation a real theater stage is designed as a fictitious prison, and in this respect the Tavianis' film is much more authentic, not only because they film a part of it on a real prison-theater stage, but also

in different cells, corridors, rooms and courtyards of the actual maximum-security prison. It is also more authentic because Lloyd collaborates with professional actors and only with some former prisoners who have been released, while the Tavianis are working with people who are incarcerated in the high-security section in the time of making of their film and they collaborate with real prison guards from the high-security section. What is similar about the two productions is the multilayeredness of the performances: Lloyd's professional actors play prisoners acting in Shakespeare's play, similarly to prisoners from Rebibbia who play themselves as prisoners playing Shakespeare's characters.

Furthermore, the Tavianis' film also looks much more artistically oriented and more professional than some other prison Shakespeare projects, that tend to be mostly aiming at the rehabilitative function of prison theater (Shakespeare Behind Bars n.d.). Although Lloyd's assassination of Caesar with the bottle of bleach may look like an artistic choice, the reason for choosing the bleach is not poetic at all. Bleach is simply one of rare weaponizable items accessible to prisoners (Stigler 2019), making Caesar's assassination look like a prison event even more than the Tavianis' film.

Although this was never the Tavianis' goal, the making of their film had a therapeutic effect on the participants like 'prison Shakespeares' usually do. This is contrary also to Shakespeare's play itself because the play actually doesn't free the assassins but makes them pay with their lives the

price of the conspiracy. It is also contrary to Lloyd's production, as it was done by professional actors. What is more, in the context of prison Shakespeare it may be considered as bad form or unethical and exploitative to mention why particular people are incarcerated. On the other hand, *Caesar Must Die* mentions the actors' sentences in the beginning of the film and it uses them to trigger an emotional engagement of the spectators. The film is different from 'prison Shakespeares' in this respect also because it is a feature film, and thus meant for the mass market like the cinematic version of Lloyd's staging, contrary to prison Shakespeares performances that almost always stay inside prisons, like Cavalli's staging.

Furthermore, although sometimes the "behind bars" productions are not reviewed in critical or aesthetic terms, *Caesar Must Die* is a professional production realized by professional theater (Cavalli) and film directors (Tavianis) and by prisoners who had gotten their acting diplomas and who have been acting for years before making this film. So it is not unusual that the film is analysed in critical and aesthetic terms by critics from all over the world, who also honored it with different professional awards.

Lloyd's adaptation may also seem to be taking the historical event down on personal and subjective level, but it is actually more of a critique on an institutional level, looking at the position of prisoners and women within society and theater politics in UK (Higgins 2018). In her work Lloyd looks at different tyrannical politicians and military

commanders like Željko Ražnatović Arkan, a Serbian war criminal who used to parade with a tiger cub on the battlefields in ex Yugoslavia in the 1990s (DonmarWarehouse 2018, 1:50; Stigler 2019).

Furthermore, music that accompanies the two plays is another aspect that makes them different both from each other and from traditional 'prison Shakespeares'. While Lloyd's heavy metal music serves to "evoke military conflict", Tavianis' music is one of the key elements that enhances the somber and sorrowful effect and contributes to making the historical event intimate and personal or subjective. A melancholic extradiegetic background music makes the atmosphere at the key moments in the film even more sad. In general music contributes significantly to the Tavianis's film and is dominated by a poetic, sad, confessional, reflexive, sometimes pessimistic saxophone, very un-Roman in comparison to music from colossal Roman epics. It is "intimate" according to Nappi, "solemn and melancholic" according to Bassi, and "magnificent and mournful" in Calbi's view (Nappi 2014, 49; Bassi 2016, 200; Calbi 2014, 245). Tavianis music is obviously composed specifically for this film and not for a theatrical staging. In other prison Shakespeares, that don't have the same resources as the Tavianis or the Donmar, the possibilities are very much limited and including music of such a high standard are beyond their means.

In addition, what makes the two stagings similar is the political background from which both Lloyd and the

Tavianis start their project, their left-wing if not even Communist references. Harriet Walter, who starred as Lloyd's 'Brutus', compared Brutus with Judy Clark, a Left-wing radical coming from Communist family, who has been serving a 75 years-to-life sentence for “driving a getaway car in a robbery that left two police officers and a guard dead”. Lloyd and Walter have actually “spent time with Judy Clark” while working on their Shakespeare trilogy for Donmar (Dex 2016). Tavianis' political background will be analysed in depth later on.

Finally, Lloyd's is an all-female feminist staging with women from different class and ethnic backgrounds, while the Tavianis' 'Romans' are low-income working class white Italians from southern Italy who turned to crime partly because of poverty.

6.4. Integrated analysis

6.4.1. Instead of the first scene of the reenactment – the beginning of the film

It is striking that the film starts and ends with the performance of the theatrical production of Shakespeare's play on the stage of the prison theater, especially that it starts and ends with 'Brutus' killing himself. Very much like in Shakespeare, Brutus is what matters in the film, contrary to the reenactment where Caesar matters. The footage of the theatrical production is shown in color, contrary to the black-and-white of the rest of the film.

Since in the first scene the film shows the end of Shakespeare's play and is set on the prison stage and we see the audience, there's a strong sense of theater even though it's a theater inside of a prison. We see shivering 'Brutus', dressed in costume that evokes Roman military clothes. He begs his soldier-friends to help him commit suicide. 'Strato' helps him and weeps, and the screen turns black. Next we see 'Brutus's' dead body lying. The colors, his facial expression and the composition evoke Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation of Christ*. With a reference to Christ this image suggests the apotheosis of 'Brutus's' idealistic sacrifice. In fact, even his enemies honour him. 'Antony' solemnly states 'Brutus' was "the noblest Roman among conspirators, who believed with courage and firmness that the deed should be undertaken to honour freedom". 'Octavius' joins him by saying with almost trembling lips that "he led a great life, great in the heart, great in the mind," and he "proclaims to Rome and the whole world: this is a man!" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 3:00). These words imply 'Brutus's' moral victory at the very start of the film. When 'Octavius' pronounces the last phrase the camera shows a flat medium shot of him and 'Antony' standing solemnly in their war clothes over 'Brutus's' death bed. Although they are his enemies and they are avenging 'Caesar', they both have grieving facial expressions, and they mourn 'Brutus's' death. Besides the possible reference to Christ, by starting the film with this scene the Tavianis eulogize 'Brutus' and elevate his sacrificial suicide to the level of seppuku, thus suggesting to spectators a very

strong ideological and political reading of the assassination of Caesar at the very start of their film, that persists later on throughout the film.

The phrase that Octavius, Caesar's heir speaks in the very beginning of the film - "This is a man!" – subtly hints to the idea of masculinity a spectator is seeing in the film. Robust, sometimes overweight, half-naked hairy bodies of white Italian men is the image maintained throughout the film, with very few exceptions that only stress the general framework of the context created by the directors. Even when they cry and die they are brave, determined, idealistic. They stand in victory and die in defeat for what they believe in. It seems to be not only idea of Shakespeare's and Tavianis' Romans, but also the Tavianis' idea of today's Italians, represented by the protagonists of the film. Victims of difficult circumstances in their lives, they end up in prison, where they seem to reconsider their own lives and find the right way through Shakespeare's Roman play. However, as former criminals, they are not "chamomile", but serious, dangerous, sometimes angry men ready to fight, whatever the cost.

Also, Roman-like costumes, together with paraphernalia and reproductions of giant Roman columns on the stage of the prison-theater facilitate the identification of actors with ancient Romans and emphasize from the beginning the direct and uninterrupted connection between the culture and history of Rome and contemporary Italy, as it will be

shown later on when looking at the para-texts surrounding the film.

In the next shot the film completely breaks off from Shakespeare's text. 'Caesar' and 'Cassius' help 'Brutus' get up and they celebrate enthusiastically their performance, accompanied by the standing ovation of their audience. So in the beginning of the film there is an opportunity to empathize with the prisoners. Their more appealing, cheerful side is shown and the spectator gets the feeling that they are not bad guys. On a metacinematic level, already in the beginning of the film, this scene implies Brutus's resurrection. With that in regard, it is important to note that this scene is going to be reshowed at the end of the film. On a metatheatrical level it contrasts Shakespeare's play where Caesar's murder doesn't free the assassins or Rome, but just begets further murder and results in even more restricted liberties. Soon the camera shows the empty theater and the audience leaving. A melancholic extradiegetic background music makes the atmosphere even more sad. This atmosphere is enhanced at this particular moment in the film by captions on the screen, that reveal that we are in the maximum security section of the Rebibbia prison. We see main actors going back to their cells silently and calmly, with their heads lowered and looking to the ground. Prison guards bolt the cell door after them without saying a word to them. This all makes spectators empathize with prisoners. On a metacinematic level it suggests that the only way the prisoners can experience freedom is through theater. This makes their

participation symbolically much more powerful than reenactors'. Although for reenactors this performance is a ritual of self-actualization, this transformative power has stronger impact on people who are serving long-term sentences in a maximum-security facility.

Then, in the next scene, in the seventh minute of the film, the image becomes black-and-white, and it stays like that until the end of the film. The drama spreads into the lives of prisoners and becomes inseparable. I agree with Calbi's analysis of the color aspect of the film according to which this "austere, stylized, 'anti-naturalistic' version of *JC* uses black-and-white contrast to draw attention to the status of the film as a cinematic artifact [...] [and it may] embody political and ethical meanings and/or to be charged with the intensity of affect" (Calbi 2014, 236). Like historical reenactors, affect and empathy are what Tavianis strive for. They want the spectators empathize with prisoners who they depict as Roman 'liberators' and not as sly conspirators. No empathy for Caesar is suggested in the film.

What is more, in their choice of black-and-white, Tavianis seem to cite Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar*, whom they know very well (Tassi 2012), and for whom, as Maria Wyke argues, "monochrome was crucial to the creation of contemporary political meaning", and as John Houseman, the producer of the film explains, to "evoke the newsreel footage of Fascism [...] and to evoke empathy" for conspirators again, and not for Caesar (as cited in Wyke

2004, 60, 61). It is noteworthy that in this comparison of Tavianis' and Mankiewicz's work, Caesar and Fascism overlap. Yet again, the historical reenactment that celebrates Caesar has been accused of reminding of Fascism (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019).

The subtitles on the screen inform us that now we witness a scene from 6 months before. The camera shows a meeting between the prison manager, theatrical director Fabio Cavalli and prisoners, where their next project, staging of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, is announced. Cavalli, who collaborated on the script of the film, in this scene sums up the plot of the play: "It's about a great Roman general, who after making Rome great and powerful, gives in to the temptation of tyranny, and for this reason will be eliminated by his fellow politicians" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 6:15). This scene is very important as in the very beginning of the film, and in a more direct way than the first scene, it presents Tavianis' and Cavalli's reading of the historical event. They see conspirators as idealists and liberators who with right reasons turn to a wrong solution, the murder. They do not engage deeply with the historical event and they take for granted the assumption that Caesar was a tyrant and that Brutus was the champion of freedom, given that the film starts and ends with Brutus' sacrificial death, and that in their public appearances they express views of this kind (RB Casting 2012, 1:09:00). Still, even as a tyrant, Caesar is introduced as a great Roman general, suggesting the greatness of roots of Italian nation and culture. Looking at this in the comparison with the reenactment, this

substitutes their first scene where reenactors perform the senate meeting from 49BC where Caesar is threatened to be declared public enemy unless he disbands his legions. Contrary to the film where this reading of Caesar is not contested, in the reenactment the scene is characterized by a loud fight between senators supporting and contesting Caesar, and Caesar's opposers do not make a strong case against him. This contributes to the goal of reenactors, which is celebrating Caesar, that contrasts the Tavianis' film.

After this, the film passes through auditions, rehearsals and daily life in prison, performance of the assassination as a prison-event and the monologues. Towards the end of the film these are followed by a series of scenes that very much follow the same structure as the scenes before the assassination: preparations for the theatrical performance, Brutus' encounter with Caesar's spirit in his tent, his farewell to Cassius, the new Philippi sequences and Cassius' suicide, and then again Brutus' suicide, the celebration of the theatrical performance with the audience. The film ends with actors going back to their cells again, and Cosimo Rega saying his famous line that suggests the cathartic effect of theater: "Since I got to know art, this cell has become a prison".

The levels of play with the performance of *JC* are complex, because there is not only the difference between the performance of the play on the stage of the prison theater at the beginning and the end of the film, and the performance

of auditions and rehearsals in the prison cells, corridors and different rooms within the maximum-security wing. Besides the two types of events, in the film we also see the performance of scenes from Shakespeare's play as prison events in prison court yards. More precisely, we see Caesar's assassination and post-assassination monologues as prison events. In this long sequences, that lasts full 15 minutes, contrary to the rest of the film there is no Fabio Cavalli and his assistants guiding the prisoners through the rehearsals and the performance and there is no seated audience following the performance. We see prisoners in their everyday clothes, with the exception of 'Caesar' wearing a white mantel evoking a Roman toga, who perform Shakespeare's play. This sense of the murder as a prison event is broken off only once, when after the assassination Cassius and Brutus say probably the most famous Shakespeare's lines ("how many ages hence...") and prison guards interrupt the performance and we are reminded of the metatheatricity of the event and of the fact that this is not a real prison murder.

Finally, at the end of the film the portraits of main actors are shown, together with the text telling what became of them afterwards, and the film ends. As mentioned, the double usage of this ending of the play serves to emphasize directors' political reading of the historical event that presents conspirators as idealists and liberators who sacrificed even their lives for the idea of freedom, but at the cost of murder. They present sacrificial deaths not once, but

three times, first Brutus, than Cassius, then again Brutus. This is enhanced by merging the historical event, that is the play, and contemporary prison aspect. By showing positive outcomes of the participation in Caesar's assassination in theater and during the film making, the film appears to suggest empathy for the participants and indirectly for the conspirators. Therefore, in order to illuminate directors' take on the historical event, I will now closely analyse key aspects of the film, some non-Shakespearean, and the scenes surrounding Caesar's assassination.

6.4.2. Before the assassination

Before the assassination scene the film shows important Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean scenes not represented in the reenactment, that frame the reading of the historical event the film appears to give. Firstly, when actors rehearse I.I., we see 'Caesar' (Arcuri) who speaks in Italian with a notable inflection of Roman local pronunciation and appears to be vulgar. Here Shakespeare's Caesar is merged with the stereotype of an average citizen of Rome today, somewhat aggressive in appearance, overconfident, speaking in a highly accented local dialect. Cavalli warns Arcuri "it's not a vulgar dialect. It's a dialect, but in the mouth of noble characters" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 13:50). Caesar is great and noble in character, as Cavalli teaches us already a second time in the beginning of the film. With an arrogant tone and a dominant posture, wearing an expensive Lacoste polo shirt, 'Caesar', who looks more like a member of today's Roman

bourgeoisie than an ancient Roman, takes over the screen. Here a subtle connection is established between Caesar and great Romans of his time and Italians today. On the other hand, contrary to the film's subtlety of this kind, reenactors are much more explicit when establishing these connections.

As the scene moves on we see 'Cassius' and 'Brutus' rehearsing their meeting in their cells, and as Cavalli frames it, "they say some fundamental things at the start of the story" (16:30). We see their close-ups, and tormented-looking 'Brutus' admits he is haunted by his mixed feelings. 'Cassius' tells him to "look in the mirror, he will find a soul of a noble man, a man needed by all of us in Rome" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 17:05). The image of Brutus being reluctant about the conspiracy elevates him in moral terms, and 'Cassius's' reference to Brutus' noble and morally impeccable ancestry serves to depict the conspiracy as a republican endeavour, unlike the arrogant Caesar we have just seen. Even the merging of the tragedy of Brutus with that of Striano contributes to this reading of the scene because throughout the film Striano is questioning Shakespeare's words. The fact that the scene is performed in prison cells and that 'Cassius' and 'Brutus' are wearing modern clothes characteristic of the prison, enhances the conclusion that Shakespeare's play is contaminated with the tragedy of the prisoners' lives and their experiences. The intimate, sorrowful music, much more unobtrusive than for instance the music of Roman colossals, contributes to the impression that what we are seeing is not a

Hollywood Roman spectacle, but a personal event. This is explicitly suggested as the scene proceeds and 'Cassius' interrupts the rehearsal and to say that he feels as if Caesar lived in his city, Naples.

As the scene proceeds, the idea of conspiracy as being the last resort of democratic and freedom-loving idealists is reinforced. We see 'Cassius' and 'Brutus' next to a cell window following the Lupercal festival. 'Cassius' states that 'Caesar' is offered the royal crown three times, and Brutus is distressed. He is helpless and is struggling to accept Caesar's tyrannical personality. Shakespeare's script and depiction of conspirators as republican idealists is here amplified with a non-Shakespearean inflection. When 'Brutus' wants to lean on the window to see the event outside, Cavalli rushes in to the scene and intervenes by saying that "Brutus doesn't want to see" and 'Brutus' then crouches hopelessly. 'Cassius' again repeats that 'Caesar' is offered the crown and he "dies from the wish to put it on his head". He seems to encourage 'Brutus', who angrily says that "he would rather be a hog-keeper than lower his head in front of a tyrant". The camera moves from a close-up to a medium shot and 'Caesar' and 'Antony' come to the room and 'Caesar', following Shakespeare's lines, arrogantly tells him how he doesn't like 'Cassius' because he doesn't drink and eat obsessively. This all depicts 'Caesar' as a darker figure.

Caesar is again depicted as a darker figure several minutes after, when in their cell Striano and Vincenzo Gallo (Lucius)

rehearse lines from II.I., and in a vulgar way in Neapolitan dialect Striano says that Caesar has to die because if he lives for too long, he will get all of them: “Addà murì! Ca se resta vivvo troppo assai, chillo Cesare ce fotte a tutti quanti” (Caesar Must Die 2013, 23:30; Pucci 2016, 348). Paraphrasing Shakespeare's lines, Striano says desperately and again in Neapolitan dialect that “if it was just for him, he wouldn't care, but Caesar would have screwed all of Rome”: “Si fosse ppe’ me sulamente nun m’importass’i nient’ ma chill’ se fott’a Roma ‘ntera” (Laurenti, Lupi 2012, 91). The expressions he uses remind of the language of criminal organizations. His Shakespearean monologue is accompanied by somber extradiegetic music. This music enhances the impression that here as well Striano is questioning Shakespeare's words. He says he “loved Caesar very much, but if he manages to put a crown on his head, he is no longer Caesar, he becomes a poisonous snake”. He continues discrediting Cesar by saying that “he scorns the world” under him. Striano moves through the prison while passionately rehearsing 'Brutus's' lines. Paradoxically, he mops the floor of the prison corridor and anxiously but decisively warns that Caesar is a serpent that may “intoxicate the whole of Rome”. In an unexpected and somewhat comic way the grand historical event is merged with the prison setting. The long, shabby and empty corridor, flanked by dirty walls with flaking paint, contrasts the grandiosity of Shakespeare's play and the historical event. Without knowing Shakespeare's play, one could easily be tricked into thinking that Striano is

reflecting not the assassination of the great Caesar, but of a fellow prisoner. The camera quickly shows a close-up of Striano in his shabby cell and he repeats, “reinforcing the sense of urgency: Caesar must die now, right now - *'Addà murì mò mò'*” (Calbi 2014, 241-242).

We learn this is the night before the Ides, and the conspirators come to Brutus's house, now represented by Striano's prison cell. The caption on the screen announces that we are about to witness “the conspiracy” (Caesar Must Die 2013, 25:20). 'Brutus' is agitated and tormented, and he speechlessly leans on the wall with his head. The flaking paint again contrasts the grandiosity of Rome. 'Brutus's' painful dilemma whether they are about to do the right thing or not seems to build on Striano's personal experiences and traumas and questions the lines of Shakespeare's play. Reasons for Caesar's assassination are again embedded with prisoners' lives.

While 'Cassius' for a moment goes to talk to 'Brutus' in private, other conspirators discuss where the sun rises. 'Metellus Cimber', who starts the discussion, refers to the others as “picciotti”, a Sicilian synonym for a boy, but more importantly, used also to refer to members of different ranks within Italian criminal organizations – *Mafia*, *'Ndrangheta*, *Camorra* and *Sacra Corona Unita*. Shakespeare's plot is here broken off with an intervention from Gennaro Solito (Cinna), one of the prisoners that suggests metatheatricity of the scene. He finds it funny and

unrealistic that conspirators are discussing something so irrelevant as where the sun rises in what is the most important and dangerous moment of their lives, when they are about to “kill the boss”. Another prisoner, Francesco De Masi, disagrees: “I like them. In fact, we’re all fools to an extent. Them too, the plotters. And just as well, that way the character is more like me”, he says (*Caesar Must Die* 2013, 25:00). Again, we see merging of Shakespeare’s play with prisoners’ lives. The scene is not comical only because it downplays the seriousness of the event, but also because the things like the sunrise and sunset are unavailable to prisoners except in performance. Since they are jailed in a high-security section, their access to things like the sunrise and sunset is very restricted. In this scene the directors are playing with Shakespeare also in a way that Casca’s words are spoken by the actor who plays Trebonius. This shows that even Shakespearean scenes they film, the Tavianis are not strictly following them.

In addition, the language Gennaro Solito uses is very significant. For ‘boss’ he says ‘capo’, which is a term regularly used in Italian criminal underworld. As cited in the beginning of the chapter, Calbi points out that “the language of Mafia culture informs the whole film” (Calbi 2014, 242) and with this kind of language the directors refer to prisoners’ previous lives. This kind of language also suggests that in the world of Italian organized crime the Ides of March happen even today when criminals turn their backs to each other and kill each other to safeguard their

own interests. A few moments later, in the same scene, Striano will again show how when rehearsing the play the prisoners refer to their own experiences.

The camera shows 'Brutus' and 'Cassius' who go back to Shakespeare's lines. Only briefly, as soon there is another interruption of Shakespeare's script. When 'conspirators' demand 'Antony's' head as well, 'Brutus' forbids it. He explains that "this is not an assassination, it is a sacrifice", alluding that they're killing 'Caesar' only to stop his tyranny. He breaks off his character and remembers his personal Ides. "If I could remove the spirit of the tyrant from him without tearing open his chest. If I could...", he utters painfully and punches his fist in the wall and sits on a chair next to Cavalli. He lowers his head in despair. Cavalli is worried and thinks Striano forgot the lines, but Vincenzo Gallo insightfully says that Striano "has got the character of Brutus inside him". He adds he's "memorised it too, but it's difficult", clearly alluding to their past in the organized crime. The following intervention by Cosimo Rega (Cassius) builds on that explicitly and leaves no room for an interpretation that may suggest otherwise. He asks rhetorically: "Difficult? But why? Have we never known bullying Caesars in our own home? And betrayal and murder... Today he doesn't want to remember". The film constantly invites us to see how prisoners identify with Shakespeare's characters and how the latter speak to their own experiences. Pucci also emphasizes Rega's words and

states that this was “too familiar to men with that past” (Pucci 2016, 348).

Striano explains to Cavalli that the lines made him remember his friend who used to sell contraband cigarettes with him in Naples. This friend had to kill a police informant who betrayed the criminal organization they belonged to, and he was reluctant to do it. The friend supposedly explained it in a very similar way: “The words were different, but the same”, says Striano with a hurting voice, and we can conclude that the friend got killed in the end. There's a sense of pressure that if they don't obey and kill the *infame* or 'Caesar' in this situation, they will be killed, and this contrasts the historical event where Brutus is not threatened and would not get killed had he not killed Caesar. So the pressure and agony are greater for the actors than for historical conspirators.

Cavalli wants to end for the day, but on Striano's insisting they get back to the scene. With the fact that in the end he was able to speak out and affront the trauma Striano seems redeemed. This scene functions as a microcosm for the whole film across which the cathartic process takes place. Not only are the spectators constantly asked to think about the performance of Shakespeare, but we see how the prisoners themselves are constantly thinking about the relations between the historical event, as narrated by Shakespeare, and their own tragic experiences. Again is Shakespeare's script reinforced with a personal account. Tavianis use an inflection from Striano's personal history to

present Brutus as an idealistic but desperate, non-violent man who has no choice but to kill a tyrant. Throughout this scene, and the film in general, Striano's performance is particularly passionate and like a good protagonist he gives the impression that he is talking about his life and his personal Ides.

The next scene starts with mournful extra-diegetic music and a close-up of a poster showing a beach and an island (Cesar Must Die 2013, 32:15). This is the only occasion in the film that we see the world outside of prison, if we don't include a couple of long night shots of the prison buildings from afar, and the poster reminds of what the prisoners can't have access to. The poster captures the escape made possible by drama, a sense of what they can't have and what they want to escape to. It is in color to emphasize what they're missing in their everyday lives and what they can get to in a way through drama. We are in the prison library, a setting that looks much more humane and cultured than the dirty and depressing grey walls and small cells we have mostly been seeing up to this point. In front of the poster Giovanni Arcuri (Caesar) reads *De bello gallico e de bello civili*, a 1936 version edited by Salvatore Sciuto. The book is published during the Fascist rule of Italy. The film text suggests that the directors are unaware of possible implications of the book as a reference to the whole conservative tradition of the great Caesar, the founder of Italy, that matches onto the Fascist use of Caesar. Indirectly, Arcuri here is kind of breaking out of

what the Tavianis want. Caesar has been so closely associated with Fascism and the celebration of Caesar, that the film might not necessarily be able to contain that version even if that's what the makers of the film are perhaps trying to do. Although the film is more interested in the story of Brutus than the story of Caesar, in this scene the film focuses on Caesar's greatness.

The camera shows a close-up of Arcuri reading Caesar's works. "And to think that at school I found this so boring! Our Julius Caesar is a great!", he exclaims enthusiastically. Cavalli stops what he's doing at the book shelf and joins by saying that Caesar was "a genius, according to Shakespeare as well". Tavianis and Cavalli here celebrate Caesar and for a moment seem to forget the label of the tyrant they have attributed to him in preceding scenes. The question would be why all of a sudden the directors give this positive portrayal of Caesar at all. When referring to this scene Bassi writes that "Shakespeare (or rather Caesar in my opinion) becomes here a vehicle to reclaim the classical roots of Italian culture" (Bassi 2016, 195). This makes the film a "story of Italians discovering a central figure in their culture", as it was recognized in a critique (Prot 2012). The scene seems to suggest that the directors place themselves in the context of establishing a relationship between Julius Caesar, Roman history and Italians today, something much more commonly done by Fascists, conservatives and, finally, the reenactors. And this scene builds on the

beginning of the film where Cavalli describes Caesar as “a great Roman general” and “noble in character”.

It is not strange that the film claims Roman history for Italians today. Bassi explains how Latin culture has been an important constituting part of the Italian education system in Italian grammar schools. In his words, it “constituted the backbone of a distinctly secular curriculum created to compete with and rival the hegemony of the Catholic Church” (Bassi 2016, 195). If Communist intellectuals who oppose the intellectual dominance and Latin tradition of the Catholic Church or the Fascist movement in Italy also think of Roman history and Julius Caesar as their predecessors, it is not strange than that the film also claims Roman history for Italians today. Even Antonio Gramsci had very positive opinion of Julius Caesar as a successful military commander, politician and writer, a view that matches onto very conservative right-wing and Fascist takes on Caesar (Federico Santangelo, as cited in Roman Society 2019, 14:00).

The film takes the history that has been used by conservatives and the Fascists, and it shows how actually on the opposite side of the political spectrum Roman history can be claimed for Italians. In that way the film is also a celebration of Romanness, but it is Romanness that completely contrasts both the Fascist and the reenactors' view of the historical event and their celebration of Caesar. The Tavianis's film shows how Shakespeare's language means something completely different from the narratives

provided by Fascist movement or reenactors. Contrary to Fascists and reenactors, the film's reading of the historical event is much closer to the interpretation of the play and the historical event in America during the American War for Independence. During those time, as Wyke insightfully shows, the British king was referred to as Caesar, and Brutus and conspirators represented those who were struggling against king's authority (Wyke 2012, 2,3). The historical event was evoked again in American Civil War where the emerging politicized working class arose against those who they considered Caesars of their time (Wyke 2012, 4,5). Even during French Revolution the revolutionaries were calling themselves 'Brutus' and were wearing the cap of liberty, worn by freed slaves in ancient Rome, also depicted on the EIDMAR coin Brutus had made after the Ides of March (Andrew 2011, 101, 159; Harris 1981, 283). The film is much closer to these traditions of seeing the conspirators as liberators, rather than a sacrosanct celebration of Caesar, like those of Fascists or reenactors.

Furthermore, in this scene prisoners go beyond Shakespeare, literally to the historical sources. They are presented in a typical scholarly setting, in a library, not as some coincidental and exotic carriers of the elite directors' political message. With his Lacoste polo shirt and an expensive-looking watch, with carefully combed hair, shaved and most probably wearing make up, Arcuri, like most of the prisoners in the film, does not portray the cinematic stereotype of a prisoner. He rather looks like a member of today's Roman bourgeoisie, or a politician in his

smart casual outfit. This all adds to the moral ambiguity of the murder in the film. Contrary to his depiction in Shakespeare's play, he doesn't look fragile at all. He's definitely not the old, fragile Caesar of the play, only a ghost of himself. On that note, in the film there is no mention of Caesar's epileptic seizure during the feast of the Lupercal. As for reading Caesar's works in the library, in Tempera's view, here we are encouraged to attribute to these volumes [*De bello Gallico e de bello civili*] a transformative, magical property capable of remoulding the readers who come into contact with them" (Tempera 2017, 274). They do seem to transform Arcuri, as he grows in culture and knowledge, and supposedly eventually even experiences catharsis. Tempera's evaluation of the role of the volumes emphasizes the similarities between the reenactment and the film, because books of this kind are often used by historical reenactors with the goal of transforming themselves "magically".

In the library, the prisoners start to rehearse the scene in which 'Decius' (Juan Dario Bonetti) comes to 'Caesar's' house on the morning of the Ides to make sure 'Caesar' goes to the Senate meeting. While rehearsing, Arcuri and Bonetti step out of their Shakespearean characters and simulate a fight between them "in real life". The whole scene is accompanied by somber extradiegetic music in the background that emphasizes the tension. Although some critics thought this was a genuine fight and a documentary sequence implemented in the film, even this fight, like the

whole film, is fiction. It is meant to represent a typical fight among prisoners and is created by the directors in collaboration with the prisoners (ANAC autori 2018).

When the fight is settled, the camera shows Vincenzo Gallo who looks at the poster on the wall showing an island. The camera zooms and the poster gains color. Calbi notices it is a reference to “evasion, escape, and fantasy” (Calbi 2014, 245). This is another similarity to the reenactment. The evasion of and the escape from their everyday reality and their position within society are, together with fantasy, among the reasons why both prisoners and historical reenactors turn to Shakespeare and reenactment. This sequence then captures the escape made possible by drama. Shortly after, the image turns back to black-and-white and a long shot of the exterior of the ugly prison buildings is shown (Caesar Must Die 2013, 37:00). We can hear horrifying thoughts of the prisoners. We can also see prisoners ceiling gazing from their cell beds. One of them is frustrated because he cannot recall his son's face, and another one cannot stand the smell of diarrhoea that all of his cell-mates suffer from. This all emphasizes what the prisoners are escaping from through drama. Again, we see prison from the outside, and for a quick moment, as Calbi noticed it, “a close-up of a self-satisfied Caesar superimposed upon the image of the prison building, which cogently furthers the identification of 'Caesar' with a 'monstrous' prison system” (Calbi 2014, 246, 245). Diarrhoea, forgetting of one's own family and children, and

horror - very far from the glimpse of a great and positive 'Caesar' from few minutes before. Still, even if the whole film presents the unenviable everyday life prisoners lead in the shabby and squalid maximum-security section controlled by severe restrictions, neither the film text nor the para-text support strongly this interpretation. This comparison doesn't suggest that much the reference to Julius Caesar himself. He is here rather a metaphor for the current state of Italy, characterized by decay in moral, social and political terms, as the film text appears to suggest. Then again, what is particularly important is the usage of Caesar a symbol of modern Italy more explicitly even from the reenactment, even if these connections are reenactments' principal goal.

6.4.3. *The assassination scene*

After the brief juxtaposition of 'Caesar's' close-up and long night shots of dirty prison buildings, we see a close-up of 'Caesar' on the morning of the Ides, walking down the narrow prison corridor to a small court yard where the meeting of the 'Senate' takes place. What these non-theatrical sequences point out is how the film continually breaks away from theatrical space that marks only the very beginning and the end of the film. Although in following sequences the film adheres closely to Shakespeare's play, it dislocates it from the theatrical stage and shows the performance of it in small, dirty and controlled environment of prison corridors, court yard and prison cells. Historically, Caesar's assassination happens in *Curia*

Pompeia, where Roman senators met, as grand as one could possibly imagine it, and in the film it is contained in small, mundane and dirty prison space. By virtue of setting the assassination in the prison this grand historic event is now occurring as if it were a prison-house murder and this, together with the fact that Shakespeare is being performed by prisoners, is what is shocking about the film.

The extradiegetic music is louder, more serious, and subtly reminds of the music from colossal movies. 'Caesar' is followed by a group of prisoners, and other prisoners walk in all directions in the corridors, simulating in that way busy streets of the late-Republican Rome. With nods of his head 'Caesar' greets people on the sides. He wears contemporary clothes: jeans and a white robe that should evoke a tunic and a toga. He walks with a sort of seriousness and self-awareness. He comes to the entrance of the small court yard. 'Spurinna' comes in front of him and warns him histrionically to beware the Ides (Image 6).

Image 6. Spurinna warning Caesar to beware the Ides. Brutus looking seriously at Cassius. Film stil.



Like in a silent film, with the effect enhanced by the black-and-white image and the extradiegetic sound, we cannot hear what they say, but we see 'Spurinna's' and 'Caesar's' lips moving. Here the limitations of the prison space come forward. The short narrow corridor is in the middle divided by a small wall and grill that for security reasons limits the access to the prison cells on both sides. Since the corridor is very short, the directors repeat the sequence with 'Caesar's' walking from one side of the corridor to the other to extend the duration of 'Caesar's' coming to the 'Senate' followed by his escort and of his meeting with 'Spurinna' thus suggesting the monumentality of this particular moment of history. This technical limitation

unfolds as 'Caesar's' escort is first shown closely behind his back, and later on completely other side of the grill and the corridor before and after he encounters 'Spurinna' (played by Francesco Carusone). Contrary to the Carusone, who plays a fool similar to eccentric personages from his town as he explained during the first rehearsal in the beginning of the film, 'Caesar's' face is visibly serious. Even if he is not alone, he still dominates the screen with his posture. While 'Spurinna' warns 'Caesar', 'Brutus' gives a worried look to 'Cassius'. Serious music still plays in the background. 'Spurinna' is violently taken away by other prisoners, just like slave 'Artemidorus' will be in few moments when trying to warn Caesar as well. We understand that 'Caesar' is the boss as his 'bodyguards' obey his orders. Curiously, contrary to the film, in the historical reenactment it is 'Spurinna' who tries to perform as solemnly as he can to convey the importance of the historical event, and 'Caesar' nonchalantly dismisses him as if he was saying nonsense and establishes his superiority over the soothsayer in that way. Reenactors don't portray an arrogant 'Caesar' as that may jeopardize his positive and celebratory depiction. Both in the film and in the reenactment there is no Popilius Lena who in the play mysteriously wishes good luck to Cassius and goes to talk to Caesar thus causing Cassius' panic attack in front of Brutus. Also, unlike the reenactment and the play, in the film there is no Mark Antony in the scene who is prevented from entering the 'Senate' by 'Trebonius'. In the film, instead, what happens is that the 'common people' greet Caesar. The music stops. There is a close-up

image showing the slave 'Artemidorus' in a black tank-top reading a warning from a paper. The next cadre shows him kneeling in front of 'Caesar' and his party and giving the parchment to 'Caesar'. 'Caesar's' company looks at him seriously. He implores 'Caesar' to read it, but 'Caesar' dismisses him arrogantly and he is taken away. At that moment we see the Chinese prisoner Ling Feng in the back among the crowd, but he's not among the 'conspirators' that enter the 'Senate' and he doesn't 'jeopardize' the whiteness presented in the film. As shown in the previous chapter, this part of the scene is not performed in the historical reenactment that in this way avoids another controversial portrayal of Caesar.

'Caesar' enters the 'Senate', a small and depressive prison courtyard, surrounded by dirty high walls from the sides, and a grill instead of the ceiling, that lets the air and sun through. We are again reminded of the dichotomy between the historical event and the limitations of the small and dirty prison spaces. While he enters, Brutus and others look at each other seriously. They are all angry and dangerous men, with determination in their eyes. "Hail, Caesar" one can hear, but we don't see the prisoners greeting him. As soon as he enters, 'Metellus Cimber' kneels next to him and starts pleading for his exiled brother (Caesar Must Die 2013, 40:50). 'Common people' follow the scene through the grill from the corridor. 'Caesar' warns 'Cimber' with a condescending tone and a severe look in his face that he "doesn't like being buttered up", like a real manly man.

'Cimber' lowers his look to the ground. 'Caesar' continues: "Your brother was condemned and exiled as a scoundrel. If you continue scraping and whining for him, I'll kick you out of here like a dog." Here the language is again a particularly relevant factor. To refer to Cimber's brother 'Caesar' uses the word *infame*, which is definitely not at the Italian translation of scoundrel. This cannot be accidental, as published Italian translations of the play do not use this word. This is a term commonly used by criminals in Italy to refer to a police informant. In this way the film quite crudely emphasizes the fact that prisoners' previous lives are embedded in the historical event represented in the film. Significantly, reenactors who show more respect for Shakespeare and, of course, for Caesar, don't use that word as well. This is the moment where in the historical reenactment the attack on 'Caesar' starts. In this way, unconsciously but pragmatically, reenactors avoid 'Caesar's' arrogant and narcissistic performance. However, in the film, the directors continue to follow Shakespeare's text further and 'Caesar' performs his arrogant part.

Other 'conspirators' stand behind 'Caesar' and look at the scene in silence. "Remember, Caesar does not wrong anyone" he says and walks toward the middle of the claustrophobic court yard. 'Metellus' stands up and puts his hand on the dagger. Other 'conspirators' come closer. All of them look serious. While 'Caesar' is walking, they all place themselves around him, alongside the walls and in the corners as if it were a 'real' prison murder. 'Brutus' places

himself on the small steps on the left, a weak reference to the “steps of the senatorial seat” (Image 7; Laurenti, Lupi 2012, 94). All of the 'conspirators' are dressed in dark clothes, that because of the monochrome appears black and contrasts 'Caesar's' long white robe. Their contemporary clothes also contributes to understanding the killing as a prison event. The whole scene is rather dark and grey and the walls of the small court yard are visibly dirty, as if suggesting the impurity of the assassination. Strangely, conspirators' daggers are easily visible tucked in their belts and 'Caesar' is not alarmed in any way because of this. In the historical reenactment, on the other hand, conspirators hide their weapons until the start of the attack. This implies that directors were unaware that in Republican Rome weapons were not carried to Senate meetings. It also implies that they didn't consult the historical sources.

Image 7. Conspirators taking their places. Film still.



'Brutus' joins 'Cimber's' plea and 'Caesar' is by now largely irritated. 'Brutus' uses the term *"Bacio le mani"*, that Calbi correctly notices to belong to the language of the Italian Mafia and other criminal organizations (Caesar Must Die 2013, 41:00; Calbi 2014, 242). *"Forgive, Caesar. Caesar, forgive,"* say 'Cassius' and 'Decius' who join the chorus. *"Cassius kneels before your feet, listen to him,"* adds 'Cassius'. 'Caesar' looks around, and sees all the 'conspirators' kneeling. *"I could be moved, if I were like you,"* he says with superiority in his voice. We see a close-up of 'Caesar's' chest and face from a lower angle, obviously emphasizing 'Caesar's' importance. *"The skies are full of a thousand flashes, but only one remains still in one place. Thus it is in the swarming world of men, I know but one who remains solid and that is me",* he says while looking somewhere in the skies, into the distance, beyond the gridded ceiling of the court yard that we can see above him. Again this implies the dichotomy between the play and the small, dirty, confined prison setting and a dichotomy of where they are and what they cannot see. If it weren't for Shakespeare's lines and 'Caesar's' toga-like robe, the scene would look more like a prison killing.

'Caesar' looks around in a patronizing way and affirms his superiority with his words, with the sound of his voice and with his stern look. *"And now I will show this to you,"* he exclaims arrogantly and continues, while the camera with a medium shot from a flat angle shows him standing in the

middle of the room, surrounded by kneeling conspirators: "Metellus, I refuse to overturn your brother's sentence and I confirm it," says 'Caesar' presumptuously. With these words, he also confirms his own sentence at that moment. The camera shows medium close-ups of 'conspirators', first 'Decius', 'Casca' and 'Cinna' who get up and prepare to attack. "Caesar, listen to us. Great Caesar, be careful. Be careful," whisper the 'conspirators' with disgust and vengeance in their voices as they come closer. 'Caesar' is enraged. We can again see daggers around the 'conspirators's' belts. 'Caesar' looks worried now and he looks around himself. "Is it not enough that Brutus knelt down in vain?, 'Caesar' shouts arrogantly. 'Conspirators' start the attack. For a brief moment the camera shows a close-up of 'Brutus', who looks shaken up. With regards to previous scenes, the scene appears to suggest subtly that also Striano himself is shaken up while acting Brutus. All of the 'conspirators' stab 'Caesar' together at the same time, somewhat unrealistically because they look like they are hugging him and 'Caesar' doesn't get the chance to put up a fight. 'Brutus' watches the scene while standing on the steps and gets ready for his blow. He kneels down as 'Caesar' falls in front of his feet. 'Caesar' looks up. The tormented 'Brutus' holds the dagger firmly in his hand (Image 8).

Image 8. Caesar falling in front of Brutus' feet. Film still.



He has a very sad facial expression and a couple of sad-looking close-ups between 'Brutus' and 'Caesar' follow. Caesar says the famous phrase: "You as well, Brutus, my son" and 'Brutus' shakes his head and in pain and profound embarrassment lowers his look to the ground. Although the majority of the script is written and spoken in dialects, Arcuri says this line in standard Italian, as if it had the cultural prestige of Latin in Shakespeare's "Et tu, Brute" version. Arcuri's saying this line in standard Italian matches the significance of Latin in Shakespeare where the whole of Shakespeare is pretending that Romans speak English and this one most important moment is Latin, which immediately raises the significance of Latin, in the same way that Suetonius in Caesar's biography writes it in Greek. It's a technique to make the phrase especially

poignant, pronounced, enhance its significance. It gives nobility to Caesar having been vulgar at the beginning of the film.

Suddenly 'Brutus' looks up, utters an unrecognizable scream and stabs 'Caesar'. The scream enhances the effect of 'Brutus' being tormented by the deed. The camera turns from a close-up to a medium shot and shows 'Brutus' stabbing 'Caesar' violently and 'Cassius' and 'Decius' looking at them from the background. Brutus and Caesar fall together on the floor from the stairs. Brutus looks up to the conspirators with a serious, exhausted, and perhaps evil look (Image 9), very different from the reenactors' less nuanced or even smiling reactions to the assassination.

Image 9. Brutus and Caesar falling down from the stairs. Film still.



Prisoners playing common people that follow the event from the corridor start to panic. They flee in fear and chaos as if it was a real prison murder, not a theatrical play. Suspensful extradiegetic music starts again and 'conspirators' try to reassure them everything is all right. Then we see a bird's eye image of the conspirators standing around Caesar's body. We see them through the aforementioned grid (Image 10). This is an unnatural angle for theater audience, and in this metatheatrical way we are reminded that most of the film doesn't occur on the prison-theater stage, there is no audience. Instead, there is a complete merging of prison life and the scenes are produced so they look like documentary footage of (everyday) scenes in the prison like this one.

Image 10. Conspirators standing around Caesar's dead body. Film still.



The camera shows a close-up of Caesar's dead body from behind while they all kneel and touch it with their hands to "wash them in his blood". Another close-up shows Cassius who says the famous phrase with a smile and a strange glow in his eyes: "How many centuries to come will see actors play this great scene of ours in kingdoms that are not yet born and in languages still to be invented." Close-up of Brutus continuing the phrase follows: "And how often will Caesar have to bleed on theatre stages, like here today, as well, in this prison of ours, lying on the stone, no more than dust?" This metatheatrical moment in Shakespeare's play itself is a recognition that this drama will have appeal, and when the prisoners perform it in the film they want to say it is about what this play means to them at that moment in the prison, not that it has been performed many times before, but them reenacting it is about confronting their lives, and it is a powerful moment precisely because of this merging with prisoners' lives, much more powerful than traditional theatrical or cinematic stagings. This metatheatrical scene implies the importance of the historical event and the acting of the event. By replacing "the basis of Pompey's statue" with the word "prison", the film evokes the seeming universality of Shakespeare's play and justifies the merging of the play with the lives of prisoners. What is most significant about it in this particular context is that it brings reference to the prison and it merges the historical events with the prison-house; it reminds us that this scene is a part of a performance within

a prison - not even on prison-theater stage - rather an illusion that we're in a historical setting.

'Mark Antony' comes, makes peace with the 'conspirators' and gets the permission to eulogize Caesar. He refers to 'conspirators' as men of honour, which is again a reference to organized crime in Italy (Calbi 2014, 242). It seems that Shakespeare's play matches onto the prisoners' lives here also because 'Antony' makes a compromise and like a member of a criminal organization accepts their offer to distribute now available powers and interests. This part as well, starting with conspirators touching Caesar's body, is not performed in the reenactment. In the reenactment, as it was shown in the previous chapter, after the assassination, 'Brutus' immediately starts his monologue after which 'Antony' delivers his oration, and the reenactment at *Largo Argentina* ends and the funeral procession starts. These differences are significant as reenactors avoid the scenes in which Caesar is depicted as a darker figure or where his murder may seem justified. Finally, they would never use the language that may refer to organized crime or anything that may compromise themselves, the cultural prestige they aim to attain, or their celebration of Caesar, the main goal of the reenactment.

In the film, what follows is another documentary-like inflection that breaks off Shakespeare's play and blends the drama with the life in prison (Image 11). We see a prison guard following the aforementioned scene from the

corridor above the court yard and another colleague joining him. A third guard comes and impatiently states that the "recreation's over. They have to go back in", but the interested guard wants to see the scene. We see how everyday lives of the prisoners are completely controlled, and the division of their (free) time and the 'freedom' of movement within the maximum-security section. One of the guards says that Antony's "a son of a bitch!" and he seems to refer not to the character Antony, but to prisoner acting him. Here again the shabby and squalid prison contrasts the ritualistic and the implied grandeur and immortality of the reenactment. Instead, blending of (prison) life and drama, the impact of absence of costume or stage, the use of the prison guards all give a sense of stepping back in contrast with moments of full integration in the film, where the actors speak as if they are prisoners talking about their lives, so we as spectators are not sure if this is the play or their real prison life. So this is one of the moments where the spectators feel like they are playing these roles and it's a reminder of them being prisoners, and it's not just declaring freedom and liberty. Quite the contrary, it's deeply ironic that the prison guards are deciding when they're going to put them back in their cells at the very moment that they've declared liberty. So this is the irony and dichotomy of what happens if one takes an event like the Ides of March and enacts it in a prison: any minute now these supposed republicans are going to have to go back into their cells.

What is more, for Bassi this is a “tongue-in-cheek homage” to a similar scene from Dino Risi’s film *The Star Actor* (*Il mattatore*), in which a famous Italian actor Vittorio Gassman delivers “a vibrant rendition of Mark Antony’s speech, where he exaggerates to the point of parody the grandiloquent style of Shakespearean acting of which Gassman himself was one of the last great proponents” (Bassi 2016, 200). As shown in the previous chapter, Gassman’s style seems very similar to histrionic performances of the reenactors. Antonio Frasca delivers in the film a much more composed monologue. It is understandable that prisoners’ performances are neither histrionic nor comic because this is not a comedy but a film that appears to give a naturalist, realist account of the historical narrative’s seeming universality and its belonging to Italian history and present.

Image 11. Prison guards’ voyeuristic gaze. Film still.



In the next scene 'Brutus' gives his monologue, the one performed also in the reenactment, in a big prison court yard (Image 12). It is a more open space, but it's still a space within the high-security prison wing. The only spectators are prisoners who are in their prison cells behind bars, they are in this contained space, and the contrast here works neatly with the reenactment because reenactors are trying to reenact the historical monumentality by virtue of walking around emblematic historical spaces so they're trying to restore the grandiosity of Rome and what this historical event meant for Roman history. 'Brutus' performs his monologue passionately, changing between loud exclamations in high register and quieter mutterings as if he was speaking to himself. His performance shows he is more talented, educated, experienced and professional than the reenactors. The camera jumps back and forth from a close-up of Brutus's face, medium and long shots and prisoners listening his speech in silence from their windows.

Image 12. Brutus explaining his reasons for killing of Caesar. Film still.



Striano gives quite an emotional and engaged performance. He is a skilled actor and the fact that he follows Shakespeare's lines closely doesn't suggest that he is drawing on his own experiences directly, although Paolo Taviani stated this in one press conference (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin 2012, 17:30). Prisoners' explicit accounts of their identification will be discussed later. In this scene there are other elements of the film text that suggest this merging less subtly, like the fact that 'Brutus', and also 'Mark Antony' after him, do not wear any costumes but plain prison clothes, or the fact that they are performing their monologues in the prison court yard. The absence of the traditional theater stage set mitigated the theatricality of these famous monologues, and made them

look like prison events. Prisoners' who in their plain clothes from the barred windows of their prison cells follow the monologues and react emotionally and loudly to them increase this effect. Also the lack of any extra-diegetic music make the scenes more documentary and naturalistic.

After 'Brutus' finishes his monologue with which he wins the crowd, 'Antony' comes to 'stage', that is the prison court yard, and performs his monologue (Image 13). He functions as the ventriloquist for the assassinated dictator. In his monologue Antony uses Shakespeare's term "uomini d'onore" several times, that in this particular context - performance off stage and within the prison - again alludes to Italian criminal organizations. Calbi sees this as one of "the most emblematic examples of the extent to which notions of Roman honour resonate with the codes of honour of organized crime associations" (Calbi 2014, 242). Again Paolo Taviani stated that to Antonio Frasca who plays Antony it "comes out with extreme naturalness, it was a language that belonged to him. The men of honour, of the mafia and of the camorra, are those from whom he came and the phrase acquired an authenticity never felt in the theatre" (Sorrentini 2012). This is not strange, as Maria Wyke notes that even before, in criminal organizations, literature and in film history Caesar's name and legacy was used by Italian criminals in the US (Wyke 2012, 119-120).

In accordance with Shakespeare's play, 'Antony' also wins the hearts of the mob and prisoners become chaotic on the barred windows of their prison cells. Their chaos is

accompanied by music background that enhances the sense of chaos. Suddenly we see a close-up image showing from a lower angle 'Antony' kneeling to 'Caesar' and whispering to his ear: "The revolt has begun. Let what has to be, be" (Image 14). The whisper to 'Caesar's' ear reinforces the idea that 'common people' are on the side of the 'liberators' and that 'Antony' is manipulating the mob because they are not privy to this comment. This is a traditional view of 'Antony', but what is peculiar is that his manipulative behavior reminds Bassi of "the Italian demagoguery and the instinct of the population to adjust rapidly to the changing political climate. 'Antony' is a son of a bitch, and the people are ready to follow him" (Bassi 2016, 200-201). This interpretation again seems to view the play as an Italian story and a reference to Italian politics today, but even more so in the first half of the 20th century when Benito Mussolini manipulated the Italian people for his purposes. As the film comes slowly to an end, the empathy for prisoners is re-established, and we forget that for a short while 'Caesar' may have been the hero of the day. 'Antony's' reevaluation of 'Caesar' shakes the previous presentation of the *dictator* as a darker figure the film appeared to give and makes him more palatable to his audience – the prisoners. 'Antony's' change in tone, just like Brutus's before, also contributes to the revision of 'Caesar' as a darker figure and make it less controversial for the film to claim him as a predecessor to Italians today.

Image 13. Antony's monologue. Film still.



Image 14. Antony whispering to dead Caesar. Film still.



6.4.5. *After the assassination*

The screen turns black for a second, as if simulating the theater curtain closing after the end of a scene. We are now in the 55th minute of the film and there are only about 15 minutes left. This points out that the assassination scene and the monologues are, like in the reenactment, the culmination of the whole performance. In the following scene, instead of performing it, the aftermath of the assassination is briefly retold by Striano and Cavalli. That is also an organizational strategy, a convenient way of taking audiences through the aspects of the play without having to perform it. First we see Striano in his cell, dressed in ordinary everyday clothes, making his bed and explaining the development of the historical events after the assassination. Then we see the setting of the stage at the prison theater and Cavalli explaining the aftermath. This strategy is used several times in the film to recount the scenes that are not going to be performed and to help spectator understand the development of Shakespeare's play. This also points to the fact that, unlike Shakespeare, the Tavianis are not so interested in the aftermath of the assassination. They spend more time showing 'Brutus' facing the challenge of the seeming necessity to kill 'Caesar' for the good of the Republic. This is followed by the scene with Caesar's ghost tormenting Brutus at his tent from IV.III. 'Brutus' is sitting at a table looking at a flickering candle in front of him. He looks exhausted and overwhelmed. Over his naked torso he wears two intersecting belts and a Roman-like mantel. This is one of

the few moments in the film that the prisoners wear costume. Extra-diegetic music emphasizes the tension of the situation. 'Caesar's ghost' is interestingly the camera itself, that slowly enters the tent and approaches 'Brutus' from behind. It comes so close to him that it almost stands on his shoulder. The voice of the camera is of 'Caesar'. The camera is accusing 'Brutus' and making him feel tormented. So the Tavianis are through the camera in that moment asking that question 'what have you done' but they are not sympathizing with 'Caesar', who is now a spirit and not body. However, they don't protract this scene, but go to 'Brutus's' and 'Cassius's' farewell at the end of V.II. We can see how much of the play the directors are cutting in between. They are obviously choosing to focus on showing the conspirators' perspective. 'Brutus' and 'Cassius' give the impression they have assassinated Caesar convinced they were doing the right thing for the Republic. Their perspective is not compromised as what follows are the images of audience coming to the performance.

The film ends similarly to the way it begun, on the stage of the prison theater, where the last couple of minutes of the film are again shown in color, like in the beginning. The rehearsals in between, that constitute the most of the film, look like a documentary footage that throughout the film shows how the 'conspirators' are led by republican ideals. The fact that 'Brutus' questions whether the killing of 'Caesar' is the right thing to do or not, the film invites spectators to sympathize with the conspirators, and definitely not with 'Caesar'. Even if 'Caesar' is presented as

a somewhat darker figure, at least darker than 'conspirators', he is still a great Roman, worthy of both the conspirators' and spectators' respect and admiration. The intervening rehearsal footage is characterized by the merging of prisoners and Shakespeare's Romans, and their identification with the latter and the prisoners and directors' empathy for the conspirators is subtly suggested also in what follows on the theater stage at the end of the film. After couple of minutes of different battle sequences on the theater stage, we see 'Cassius' who performs his suicide. He is calm and doesn't seem to question if what they had done was wrong. He even says he "has no regrets" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 1:02:45). It's not Pindarus who stabs him like in the play, but he does it by himself. The screen turns black and we hear a prisoner yell in the background that "Cassius ceased to live" and voices respond in chorus "honor to Cassius", celebrating him one more time. This again serves to stimulate an emotional response by the audience in the prison theater and by spectators watching the film, who are to empathize with the conspirators. The camera show the end of V.V., a close-up of kneeling 'Brutus' who doesn't look so peaceful about what they have done as 'Cassius' and others are. He evokes Caesar's spirit that still seems to torment him. This actually depicts 'Brutus' in a good light as he is constantly questioning if what they have done was good. His arm trembles and he's not able to commit suicide by himself. He goes from one 'soldier' to another to seek help. They're all sad and unable to make themselves do it (Caesar Must Die 2013, 1:04:50).

By saying that “it's more dignified to do it by themselves” he evokes the idealism that, as the film appears to suggest, led the conspirators to kill Caesar. Like a true martyr, he refuses 'Decius' begging, he doesn't want to escape and save himself. The screen turns black again and we see a Christ-like 'Brutus' lying on a catafalque. It's a shiny mattress in different shades of red. 'Brutus' is lying with a naked torso, on a double axe underneath him, and with his sword above his head. The sad extra-diegetic music starts. 'Cassius' and 'Caesar' in a white toga-like mantle come and they help 'Brutus' up. They take a bow, the audience responds with a standing ovation and they celebrate a successful performance. The loud celebration is abruptly interrupted by the images of the prisoners going back to their cells. On a metacinematic level this scene suggests that the performance of the drama on the theater stage is the fiction and now we are going back to reality, the everyday life in prison. By peeking inside bare cells and with a prison guard speechlessly locking the door behind the prisoners we are reminded that this is a crude reality. This crudeness is emphasized by Rega who looks behind at the door while they are being locked. He looks desperately around himself and then straight in the camera and tells the famous phrase, that was actually his own comment on the life in prison after a sort of catharsis provided by art and theater (Ferrari 2012, 3:07; RB Casting 2012, 38:05; Vitali 2012). Here the contemporary narrative dominates, and we are definitely not thinking this is a film about ancient Romans. This cathartic effect is also suggested by sad music

and captions showing how Rega and Arcuri have written books about their experiences and Striano was released and became a successful actor.

Although the film ends with prison aspect dominating over ancient Rome, throughout the film the two aspects are merged. Roman conspirators are presented as idealists and republicans, but they are also compromised at points in which prisoners' previous experiences enter the scene. Caesar, although represented as a somewhat darker figure, is still an admirable and great Roman, and the film constantly calls into question the conspirators' view that he should have been killed. What is particularly interesting is the relationship and connections between prisoners today and Romans that the film text establishes, at times explicit and at other times more subtle, perhaps even unconsciously done by the directors. The para-texts shed light on these connections and they also contribute to the merging of prisoners or contemporary Italians with ancient Romans, and they claim Caesar for contemporary Italians.

6.5. More on the film text: the gender issue - female roles and the question of masculinity

When it comes to the gender issue, the Tavianis' film seems like a perfect opposite to Lloyd's production because it doesn't show any of Shakespeare's scenes with female characters, Calpurnia and Portia, and it offers a portrayal of a patriarchal, heteronormative, hierarchy- and power-bound masculinity.

In the film, Calpurnia is mentioned by 'Decius' (Juan Dario Bonetti) who, following Shakespeare's play, mocks 'Caesar' for wanting to miss the Senate meeting on the morning of the Ides because of "bad dreams of his wife" (Caesar Must Die 2013, 35:00). With this ridiculing comment of Calpurnia's fears, Shakespeare himself contributes to establishing a binary patriarchal relationship between men and women and to portrayal of women as an overemotional, superstitious and weaker sex. There are more examples of sexism inherent to the play. In several circumstances Portia humiliates herself for being a woman. In II.I. she admits pitifully that she is a woman, but she considers herself "stronger than her sex" because she has two strong men in her life, her father Cato and her husband Brutus. In II.III. she boasts to Lucius of having a "man's mind" and complains apologetically for her "woman's might", crying "how weak a thing the heart of woman is!" On a similar note, Brutus in II.I. makes mention of women's "melting spirits" as a trait opposite to idealism and courage that bond the conspirators. Finally, Cassius in I.III. complains to Casca for their passiveness and lack of bravery by saying that they are "govern'd with their mothers' spirits" (Folger Digital Texts n.d., 1.3.86).

Furthermore, the decision not to stage the scenes in which Calpurnia is worried about her husband's fortune helps to maintain the image of the great, manly Caesar the film appears to give. On the same note, what contributes to the same effect is the choice of the Tavianis to omit the moment from I.II. when Cassius mocks Caesar's cries for help from

when they were swimming across Tiber or when Caesar had a fever in Spain. Throughout the film Caesar is portrayed as a powerful, robust man who dominates the screen with his body, facial expressions, gestures, costume, his words and the sound of his voice. A brief reminder of Caesar's mortality, besides the assassination obviously, is a scene from I.II. where Caesar reminds Antony that he doesn't hear well on his left ear. Caesar's hearing problems are evoked in another scene in the film, in II.II. when 'Decius' comes to take him to the Senate meeting and 'Caesar' angrily tells him to speak to his other ear (Caesar Must Die, DVD version, 21:00, 33:00).

In addition, women are mentioned in a very particular way in two non-Shakespearean scenes in the film, first during the auditions at the beginning of the film. Even if some of the prisoners are shown crying because, as instructed by the directors, they are playing an emotional farewell with their wives at a border control, the scene is dominated by other prisoners who violently gesticulate and shout in the camera their name, date and place of birth and their father's name. This is the only time in the film men are shown weak or crying. Because "the actors are asked to introduce themselves by their [...] *father's* name", as Bassi notes, in this scene "homosocial, patriarchal order is symbolically consolidated" (Bassi 2016, 192; emphasis original). And this order recurs throughout the film.

Several minutes after, in a seemingly realistic scene, women are mentioned again. "As the seats are being installed in

the auditorium,” as Mazer notes, “one inmate caresses the cushion of one of them and fantasizes about the woman's bottom that may soon occupy it” (Mazer 2015, 171). This points to the fact that the prison inmates long for women, love and intimacy, and this longing makes a great and painful part of their everyday lives, especially for the participants of the film, because they are detained in the high-security section and therefore have even more restricted possibilities of seeing their wives or girlfriends. Balázs and Nappi argue that women are completely omitted from the film in order to suggest that the inmates miss them the most from the life outside of the prison (Balázs 2014, 7; Nappi 2014, 42), but if that was one of the morales of the film, *Julius Caesar* would definitely be a wrong medium to tell it as it doesn't deal with the topic at all. The Tavianis give a very different explanation for this choice, although their explanation seems implausible too. They said that “they have decided not to cast male actors for female roles, [because] cameras, zoom and close-ups are able to show moustaches, pimples and imperfections of male faces and the result of having a man playing a female character in a Shakespearean tragedy would have been ridiculous” (Montorfano 2019, 2; Bassi 2016, 191). This is an unconvincing response because there are different solutions to the issue they highlighted, starting from a good make-up or casting actresses from women's sections at Rebibbia or even external actresses, like Cavalli did for his theatrical adaptation of *Julius Caesar* and for his other

works at Rebibbia (LaRibalta 2014, 1:55; Sales 2012; Montorfano 2012, 2; Compagnia Ceralaccha n.d.).

However non-chauvinist their credentials may be and however on a superficial level the Tavianis' appears to be an aesthetic choice, their explanation and the actual sequence from the film suggest the influence of the patriarchal, heteronormative, chauvinist system. These also suggest a view of women as uniformed object of male gaze and sexual desire. This doesn't imply that the Tavianis are chauvinists, but their statement reflects a problem characteristic of the context of the film's social and cultural production and distribution – not only the misogynist context of prison but also of Italy, and more widely of the European and American mass culture. Although it doesn't necessarily promote it, “on a metaphorical level the film also functions as a perfect paradigm of the Italian patriarchal and familist system” as Mancino has noted as well (Mancino 2012, 26, 35). One can see how much more radical the treatment of gender, both women and men, is in the film than in the reenactment.

By looking at non-Shakespearean scenes that are related to women in the film and in the reenactment, even in these scenes one can see how the film is much more the story of Brutus and the reenactment the story of Caesar. In the two of reenactment's non-Shakespearean scenes women play some of the key roles: first during the funeral procession where they cry for Caesar, their cries being very loud and

engrossing, and then at the Forum where 'Calpurnia' delivers an intimate eulogy for her great husband.

The gender issue in the film has also another layer. Had the film not been a story about Brutus and the Tavianis actually wanted to tell a story about prisoners' vulnerability and living conditions, not casting them as women would have been a missed opportunity. Casting them as women would be an effective way to address the issue of the type of masculinity and sexuality acceptable in prison. Prison is a very oppressive place where men are extremely vulnerable on every level and it is "an environment where [...] virility is felt to be under constant attack" (Montorfano 2019, 4). So, even to act in prison-theater can be very problematic and be viewed by others as feminine or not heteronormative. In the film, like in prison, only dominant, aggressive, powerful and heterosexual masculinity is acceptable. Failing to conform to the established norms, and performing any other, less dominant and homogeneous types of masculinity may be detrimental. Only appearing feminized or homosexual can be life-threatening in the prison and the actors complained about being teased by other prisoners when they had to play the roles of women (Montorfano 2015, 70). On the other hand, *Caesar Must Die* is a safe zone, as it offers an image of "a virile [...] undertaking, impervious to any gender disturbance" (Bassi 2016, 191). These are manly men, "accustomed to commanding with the gun in their hand" (claumartino1952 2012b, 20:00).

In the prison context, just like in criminal organizations many of them came from, this power-bound heteronormative masculinity is tightly connected to hierarchy. Hierarchy is also inherent to Shakespeare's play and to the film text. And in the film it is Caesar, Brutus, Cassius and Antony who show and exert their power and authority. Caesar does it not only until he is assassinated but also when through the eye of the camera his spirit torments Brutus in his tent at Philippi. Brutus and Cassius exert their authority over other conspirators and Antony exerts his authority when he stirs the mob. In non-Shakespearean scene the guards exert their control of the life in prison e.g when they want to interrupt the prisoners acting over 'Caesar's' dead body, or at the beginning and the end of the film when they escort the protagonists to their cells.

6.6. The role of language: from personal to national identity and back

One of the principal means to express the aforementioned heteronormative, patriarchal masculine authority is the language used by the actors. It is also one of the features that distinguishes this film from other adaptations and appropriations of *Julius Caesar*. As Calbi notices, *JC* is translated into the language of the Italian criminal organizations and points out the actors' past lives (Calbi 2014, 240, 241, 242). Like in prison, the only acceptable type of masculinity in these lives is the one that is violent and unyielding.

But the reason to use jargon, locally accented Italian and dialects is not only to present a particular type of masculinity. As Montorfano insightfully argues, a part of the reason for using dialects lies in the fact that a large number of prisoners does not know their own mother tongue – Italian – well enough. As she suggests, for them Italian is “a foreign language”, so, as Laurenti and Lupi put it, in a certain way “dialect is their mother tongue” (Montorfano 2012, 33-34; Laurenti, Lupi 2012, 92) and they use dialects for practical purposes. Some prisoners who acted in the film have stated themselves that they consider dialect and not the standard Italian, “their own language” that enables them to “express themselves more easily”, to feel comfortable and “confident on stage” and in front of the camera (Caesar Must Die 2013, DVD interviews). This is of great importance for the process of their identification with the characters. That is the reason why, under Cavalli's guidance, prisoners have always been translating works to their dialects. So in the film, as in their plays, they speak in Neapolitan, Apulian, Roman, Sicilian, Calabrian, Ligurian (Laurenti, Lupi 2012, 92).

For the purpose of making the film, Cavalli translated *JC* from English, from the In-Folio version from 1623. The script of the film is not in verse, contrary to the script of the later Cavalli's theatrical staging, that in part was written in verse (Montorfano 2012, 34). While translating, Cavalli took in consideration ten or so previous Italian translations that he found “too academic” (Montorfano 2012, 31, 32). He prepared the core of the text and then collaborated with

prisoners on their translations of these into dialects. They translated the script so it sounds suited to present day, like a modern dialogue among prisoners. The historical time-frame is not retained in language, it is completely shifted and it does not sound like Shakespeare's Renaissance Elizabethan text.

Furthermore, in this chapter I argue that, like in the reenactment, Shakespeare is used in the film to reclaim Roman history for Italians. Although prisoners speak in different dialects, the overall image of Italy promoted here is not necessarily a pluralistic one. Rather than an image rooted more in regional cultures as displayed through the use of dialect, it is a culture rooted in ancient Rome. Regarding the role of Shakespeare as a cultural signifier in the film, it is not strange that Tavianis turn to an English play to assert the relationship between ancient Rome and modern Italy. Shakespeare is a suitable medium, not because they would be reclaiming Rome from the English, but because of his cultural prestige and because Tavianis' reading of the assassination largely conforms to his.

The fact that the issue of the national identity at stake is embodied through dialects can be read from Cavalli's interview in which he recognized "the problem of communicating in a country where Italian is a language unified after the war [WWII] with television [...] a language that in fact belongs to everyone but does not belong to anyone" (Di Fabio 2015, 167-168). Hence the transformation

of national identity to Roman history through regional languages.

The film is a representative of its cultural and social context in the way that through the spoken language it is claiming Roman history for itself. As Bassi notes, "Arcuri's Roman accent seems rather to connote the exclamation as a form of national, if not municipal, jingoism: the Latin language and the Roman past, far from being the exclusive province of Fascist glorifications, have often been used to exalt Italianness and are increasingly deployed in popular contexts such as soccer and tattoo culture to flaunt a distinctly local Roman identity" (Bassi 2016, 196). If not exactly a manifestation of jingosim, it may rather be a manifestation of a national cultural pride and perhaps even a racial statement. This may be hinted with the passing appearance of a Nigerian prisoner in the cell with Striano who in standard Italian compared the aftermath of the assassination to a situation in his home country. Bassi notices this is "the only time we see him in the film", although African immigrants today compose a substantial part of Italian society and "over 30% of the Italian prison population is composed of foreign nationals, many of whom are recent African migrants" (Bassi 2016, 197). These people, however, remain invisible in the film, as the faces we see on screen are exclusively white and Italian. Although three non-Italian names are mentioned in the cast - Ling Feng, Alfredo Ramirez Rebollo, Humberto Trujillo - I was not able to see the last two in the film. Feng appears for

several seconds in the film together with another Italian prisoner, as he passes by Striano in a corridor while he is rehearsing his anti-Caesarean lines (Caesar Must Die 2013, 24:45). While the Italian prisoner is irritated by Striano's rehearsal and mocks him for joining the theater, Feng remains mute and without reaction, not compromising the whiteness the film appears to claim for Italians. The scene also refers to the stigma of considering acting in prison a feminized activity that strips the ex-Mafia men of their virility.

In addition, the issue of nationality of the prisoners is distorted at the beginning of the film. When prisoners start rehearsing the scenes, Vittorio Parella who plays Casca says to Cavalli he's "a citizen of the world" and as a characteristic of the USA in his view, he starts performing swing dance and singing in English, followed by his parody of "a traditional Maori haka" (Bassi 2016, 198). Everybody laughs at his performance although looking at the fact that he performs haka as something exotic and a symbol of the "other" there is not much to laugh here. However anti-racist their credentials, the outcome of their casting is that whiteness prevails on screen with the consequence that it seems to be reclaimed for Italians in the process of reclaiming Roman history for them.

6.7. The play with spatiality

Another key strategy embedded in the film text and important for the film's relation to Shakespeare's play is the

play with spaces. The film starts in color, with the last scene of Shakespeare's play performed on the stage of the prison-theater in front of a seated audience. The structure of the film actually breaks away from the performance of the play on the stage of the prison theater early on in the film, immediately after the last scene of the play is performed at the beginning of the film, and it comes back to the performance of the play on the theater stage only at the end of the film, also shown in color. The rest of the film, including Caesar's assassination, takes place off the stage of the prison theater and is presented in black-and-white. The assassination takes place in shabby and squalid prison court yard, and other scenes happen in prison cells, corridors, courtyards and at other venues within the maximum-security section.

The performance of the play is always at stake in the film and the film does not show all scenes from Shakespeare's play. The whole film is metatheatrical in the way that it is constantly asking the spectator to think about theater and performance whereas when one goes to a traditional theatrical staging of *JC*, it invites the spectator into the Renaissance world it depicts, even if it is Shakespeare's version of the historical moment in question. In the film, however, the spectator is invited to constantly think about performing Shakespeare.

The film doesn't just break away from Shakespeare's play and its performance on the stage of the prison-theater, in the sense that there's no seated audience watching a

performance of a theater production of the play. For the most part of the film, we are not looking the performance of the play, but the preparations for it through scenes from daily life in prison. In these daily scenes, while auditioning, rehearsing the play, setting the stage, prisoners are shown as their own audience. The only other audience they have is Cavalli, who is guiding them through the rehearsals, and the prison guards who are policing and controlling their movements. This shows how the performance of the play is contaminated by the inflections of everyday life in the prison, that is completely merged also with the rehearsals for the play, that constitute the large majority of the film. Merging of the narrative of the play and life in prison is important because this is the key way in which the Tavianis are structuring the film, indicating that this enactment of the drama is the way for the prisoners to engage with their issues, or that the drama itself is a kind of performance of the things that matter to them. The Tavianis are constantly embedding reasons for Caesar's assassination with prisoners lives. This merging of rehearsing a play and living life in a prison is constantly inviting the film's audience to think about how this play has significance for the prisoners and for contemporary life in Italy. The film itself is structured in the way the scenes from the play make the spectator think he is witnessing documentary footage of real-life prison events e.g. the speeches of Brutus and Antony over the body. Even the assassination itself looks not like the assassination of the great Julius Caesar but rather like an assassination of a prisoner. The element

that suggests it is not a killing of a prisoner is Caesar's toga-like costume and conspirators' Roman-like daggers.

So the film is made of sequences produced so they look like everyday events in the prison, so what we're seeing is the prison life, the build up to the killing of someone in the prison. This is achieved through different methods: the prisoners barely hold the scripts, they're not in costume but in their prison clothes, they're not on a stage but they're moving around within the prison, the people sort of engaging and watching them are prisoners, and also there are moments where they completely break away from the play and talk about their experiences, e.g. when Sasà Striano suddenly can't pronounce Brutus's lines because he remembers a moment in his life where his friend got killed. Other moments in the film when the spectator cannot be sure if the actors are speaking as prisoners or as Romans they play are e.g. the fight between 'Caesar' and 'Decius' in the prison library or a scene when prisoners-conspirators are having an argument about where the sun rises. There's constant merging of preparing to perform Shakespeare and of this being a kind of real event in the prison. And that seems to be done quite liberally, e.g. just after the assassination scene when the camera looks down on Mark Antony and the conspirators through the grill from an angle that has no relationship to the perspective of an audience in a performance of a play, it seems much more like a documentary, like they're somehow managing to capture someone getting killed in a prison. This all makes

the film's play with spatiality an important part of the strategic design of the film.

Furthermore, not all parts of the play are performed in the film. After starting the film with the end of the play, the shots showing the theater audience leaving the prison and actors going back to their cells, the film shows the preparations of the theatrical staging of the play, the first meeting of the prisoners and Cavalli, auditions and rehearsals merged with life in prison. So, looking at the structure of the play itself, the film is made of sequences produced so they look like everyday events in the prison, so what we're seeing is the prison life, the build up to the killing of someone in the prison. It looks like this also because the film omits parts or whole Shakespeare's scenes before the assassination. The scenes after the forum speeches are simply retold by Striano and Cavalli with a sentence or two. The battle scenes are mixed together and suicides of Cassius and Brutus precede the final sequence of the film, showing actors going back to their cells again and Rega's final words.

As it was shown in the previous chapter, the reenactment also does not depict all the scenes from Shakespeare's play, but like the film, it adds other non-Shakespearean scenes and indicates different emphases from the film. The difference in non-Shakespearean scenes in the two cases is very important. As it was pointed out, reenactors add Caesar's funeral, a chance to present Caesar as the victim and to celebrate him ritualistically. In the film they don't

perform the funeral procession, and therefore there is no chance to celebrate Caesar as the victim. On the other hand, in the reenactment this celebration of Caesar also takes a lot of time, because the funeral procession goes around important places and monuments within Rome's historic center. The funeral also includes repetitions of monologues that celebrate Caesar. In the film, however, as it is shown in this chapter, non-Shakespearean scenes added by Tavianis and Cavalli serve the purpose of rehabilitating the prisoners and presenting the conspirators as idealists and liberators. The assassination scene takes central, culminating place in both performances and its effect is extended by the monologues that immediately follow (in reenactment's case, also to the funeral and to the repetition of the monologues). After this extended climatic point, both performances end almost abruptly.

From the film text to para-texts: posters, DVD covers, and the reception of the film

Even on the poster for the film the directors establish a connection between ancient Rome and Italians today (Image 15). The poster is composed of two horizontal photographs that meet in the middle, where the title of the film in big letters accompanied by directors' names underneath crosses the two photos and ties them together. The poster takes advantage of both Caesar's and Tavianis' cultural connotations and prestige. Both photographs show profiles of prisoners standing in line. The upper photograph is shot in color and shows prisoners dressed in

Roman-like costumes standing on the stage of the prison-theater, in front of big fake Roman columns. The photograph underneath is shot in black-and-white, and it shows prisoners in plain everyday clothes. By showing the same prisoners in two different settings, the poster establishes a connection between ancient Rome and Italians today, suggesting that the latter have Roman roots. By merging photographs in color and in black-and-white the poster matches the techniques of the film and suggests that drama is more alive than daily life in prison. It is more alive because, even if the prison aspect at times seems to dominate the film, the performance of Shakespeare's Roman play, as the film suggests, has a life-changing effect on the prisoners. In addition, for the promotion of the film in some other countries, like in Germany (Image 16.) and Brazil (Centrodeartesuff n.d.), the original poster has been altered in a way that it still suggested the same interpretation of the film - the identification of prisoners as Romans. The German and Brazilian poster shows the original color photograph of prisoners standing as Romans embedded in the middle of a b/w photograph showing the same prisoners standing in line in plain clothes.

Furthermore, on the 'livelier' part of the original poster there is no 'Caesar', and on the b/w photo and on the German and Brazilian version of the poster he is far from the eye of the spectator, among the conspirators. The poster shows only the conspirators' perspective, and it simply states that "Caesar Must Die" without questioning the title of the film. This contrasts the poster of the historical

reenactment (the 2019 edition), dominated by the image of a solem-looking 'Caesar' in a purple toga sitting on a chair and wearing golden laurel wreath and bracelets. Compared with the poster of the film, the captions and images on the reenactors' version clearly suggest this is a celebration of Caesar. Even the names of Brutus and Mark Antony are printed in smaller size and under almost all other information on the poster, without any allusion to their significance in the historical event or in Shakespeare's play that the reenactment is based on.

What the poster of the film suggests on another layer is a sense of community among prisoners, that cannot be seen on the poster for the reenactment. This is recognized by Bassi, who contrasts the film's poster to the "fragmented, uncertain and dissilusioned state" of Italy (Bassi 2016, 201). Disillusioned as they are, both reenactors and prisoners are now looking for new directions in the history of ancient Rome and they are finding an escape from their everyday reality through performing the play and playing at being Romans. The role of the film and theater in creating a sense of community and friendship and the importance of community in a prison has been confirmed by the prisoners (Arcuri 2011, 103; Striano 2016e, 86).

Image 15. The official poster for the film.



This sense of community caused by the film making emerged also among its audience and within public discourse in Italy. Looking at the context of the film's production and distribution, it has awakened a sense of national cultural identity and pride among Italians, especially when the film was awarded the Golden Bear in Berlin and when it was chosen as the candidate for the Oscar Award. "There was a sincere pride among many Italians, at a time so troubled for our country", one journalist wrote in the prominent national daily newspaper *La Repubblica* (Morgoglione 2012). And it was a time of great political upheavals: at the peak of a great economic and political crisis the mogul Silvio Berlusconi had

resigned from the office of Prime Minister after being one of most important protagonists of Italian politics and business for 17 years, and Italy was now 'governed' by provisional government led by Mario Monti. The film that promoted republican values, evoked the great Roman roots of Italy and suggested a catharsis for its participants, from the critics' and audience's perspective somehow seemed to restore dignity to a country that was looked down at from the perspective of the international community. Although the film text doesn't suggest that explicitly, it was received as if it was suggesting that the country itself was capable of a catharsis and a change in that particularly painful moment of history. As the Tavianis stated, when they won the Golden Bear, some people "put the national flag on their balconies", as if it were a national holiday. They commented that in some people's eyes they "became patriots" (Tassi 2012) and they received "a lot of messages and hundreds of phone calls in which everyone said 'thank you for Italy'" (Sorrentini 2012; Morgoglione 2012). Even the minister of culture Ornaghi stated that in that period the government was "trying to give a new image of Italy, and the film helped them" (Morgoglione 2012).

This connects the film with the tradition of Italian cinema as a cultural ambassador and vehicle for generating pride in national identity like in silent Roman history films (Wyke 1997, 48). In the the Fascist era Roman films were a useful and effective tool that helped homogenize Italians around an idea of inheriting the greatness of ancient Rome (Wyke 1997, 49, 220-221). Rather than celebrating the

greatness of Caesar that was characteristic of the Fascist regime, *Caesar Must Die* celebrates republican idealism, even if it questions the assassination as a means of safeguarding democracy. By merging Julius Caesar and Roman history with the prison narrative, the film makes connections between Rome and Italy today. In prisoners' lives the film locates situations, problems and dilemmas similar to those of Shakespeare's conspirators. By presenting a catharsis achieved through the reenactment and the questioning of Caesar's assassination by his very own murderers, the film offers itself as a not so subtle warning to Italians today to reflect on the problems caused by organized crime and corrupt and controversial politicians, that have been tormenting the country for decades. Although the film doesn't present a solution to the problems of Italy or the play, it does suggest that catharsis is possible.

In addition, the sense of community the film awakened also manifested in the fact that the award from Berlin was celebrated in Italian press as a victory of the Italian national film style, and these "nationalistic" and "ecumenical manifestations of the Italian pride" were recognized by journalists and by the renowned Italian film director and distributor Nanni Moretti (Morgoglione 2012). Chiti notes that the film was "trumpeted as a masterpiece by a biased press with the sole purpose of glorifying an entire national cinema" (Chiti 2012). The supposed Italianness of the film pertains to understanding the film as an homage to Italian Neorealism and the film's coherence with the

Taviani's acclaimed opus. But these praises of the film after it received prestigious awards reveal the hypocrisy of the Italian cinematic elite, because the film had been ignored before it achieved success. They also fail to recognize that the most Italian characteristics of the film are the problems of the country the film is addressing: the burden of the organized crime and corrupt politicians hanging as the sword of Damocles over the country's present and future, and its detrimental influence on the lives of the people. The problems that the film appears to be addressing might actually be the reason why, as both Moretti and the Taviani complained "nobody believed in the film" and "nobody wanted to distribute it", seeing the film either too controversial or too artistic for the audience that may not see the connections (Caroli 2012; La Repubblica 2012b; RB Casting 2012, 0:50; Morgoglione 2012).

Image 16. German poster for the film. Camino Filmverleih GmbH



Other posters, however, focus on different aspects of the film. The Korean and Swedish posters focus on the assassination scene, thus recognizing its importance in the film. They alter the strategy of the film that shows the assassination in black-and-white and they use photographs of the scene shot in color that we cannot see in any other place (Images 17 and 18). The first shows the moment in which 'Brutus' kneels before 'Caesar' and joins 'Metellus's' plea, and the other shows 'Brutus' stabbing 'Caesar'.

Although they are not emphasizing what the acting in the film actually achieves, they are noteworthy as they point out the centrality of the assassination in the film. As the analysis of the film text has shown, the structure of the film functions as a build up to the assassination, and post-assassination scenes from Shakespeare's play have been radically reduced and mixed. This doesn't compromise the main theme within the film text, Brutus's moral dilemma whether it is right to kill a tyrant or not, as the film spends much more time with the preparations for the assassination than its aftermath.

Image 17. Korean poster (Sinematurk n.d.)



Image 18. Swedish poster (Payador 2012)



6.8. *The directors' take on the historical event: "a very Italian story"*

Two things that permeate the film continuously are the film's interpretation of the historical event, that is its assessment of Caesar and conspirators' motives behind the assassination, and the parallels between the historical event and contemporary Italy that suggest a particular

relationship between ancient Rome and the identity and culture of Italians today. Although the Tavianis and Cavalli understand the historical event differently from historical reenactors, the film is similar to the reenactment in the way it suggests that the historical event is significant for Italians today as an important part of their patrimony and identity. Actually, the film text is in this respect much more explicit than the reenactment. The way in which Cavalli agrees with Arcuri that "*our* Julius Caesar is great" and the fact that the prisoners are continuously establishing explicit relationships between Julius Caesar, the conspirators and their own experiences, suggests that in Italian culture the Ides of March transcend time.

When Caesar is offered the crown during the Lupercal feast, Cosimo Rega finds it disgraceful and he suggests that his hometown Naples suffers from similar problems. He disdainfully judges Caesar for his ambitions and political success. He's very explicit about the comparison between Rome of Caesar's time and his Naples and he actually says that he feels as if "Shakespeare lived in the streets of his city". Later, he establishes again a direct connection between Rome and contemporary Italy when he criticizes Striano for not being able to play his role. He comments that it cannot be difficult to relate to his character since "they had bullying Caesars in their own homes"(Caesar Must Die 2013, 19:50, 28:40). We can see that the film suggests the Ides of March are an event recurring in Italian history and present, and the film text reveals what the

authors think of the historical event and of Julius Caesar. We can see that Rega considers Caesar an ambitious bully, and the fact that he is offered a crown is a disgrace in Rega's view. The directors' understanding of Caesar, embedded in the film text like this, is more ambivalent than the reenactors'. In a way they disregard Caesar's political and military achievements and they only see the conspirators' preoccupation with the future of democracy in the Roman Republic. They see this preoccupation as the only reason behind Caesar's assassination. The data from the para-text confirms these views, and they are manifested in various interviews. For example, in Taviani's words, "Brutus [...] understands that democracy and freedom are in danger, and to save them he is ready to kill the man to whom he owes everything" (also ANAC autori 2018, 11:30; salentowebtv 2012, 1:30; Crespi 2012).

The directors are much more interested in Brutus than in Caesar, they even call it the drama of Brutus (Tassi 2012). They structure the whole film around Brutus' moral dilemma and they merge it with Striano's and other prisoners' personal stories. In this interpretation of the historical event, the film text builds on the seriousness of crimes the prisoners have committed as in the beginning the captions on screen disclose the severe sentences the prisoners were condemned to. On the other hand, the film ends on a positive note. After Rega's conclusion that crudely emphasizes the cathartic effect of drama, the captions on the screen suggest that the protagonists have

managed to change their ways and become successful writers and actors. This all downplays the moral issue of the conspiracy and it embodies the directors' empathy for conspirators and prisoners that permeates the whole film. The film suggests it is morally problematic to kill anyone, even Caesar, but it doesn't seem to question the conspirators' supposedly good intentions. Even if it may seem that the references to Italian criminal organizations somewhat compromise that point of view, Antony, the famous demagogue with his own agenda, is the person who tries to bring up these references the most, and that actually depicts him in a bad light rather than the conspirators. Even when the conspirators commit suicide towards the end of the film, the film suggests they do it because of their idealism.

Furthermore, the film's recognition of Roman history, and this historical event particularly, as a great part of Italian identity even today is emphasized by the data from the para-texts. Because of supposedly close connections between the Ides of March and contemporary Italians the Tavianis actually chose this play for their *Rebibbia* project. As they said, they “had never had anything else in mind” (Lormand 2012). They have “thought of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* because it is *an Italian story, a Roman story*, it is a story that lies in the *collective imagination of the whole Italian population*” (RB Casting 2012, 9:30; cineplexcolombia 2013, 2:00; emphasis mine). In several occasions the directors described this as “a very Italian story” and they

said it “belonged to them, to their collective imaginary, to their emotional and cultural patrimony” (RB Casting 2012; Film at Lincoln Center 2012, 29:40; Catelli 2012; Cineforum Arcifit Omegna 2012; ANAC autori 2018). Even Italian film critics recognized *JC* as “an ‘Italian’ tragedy, which tells a crucial moment in the history of Italy” (Taddei n.d.). This points out that, like reenactors, both film directors and critics understand Italian national cultural identity today as an extension of ancient Rome. Like in the film text, as we have seen, also in the para-text the Tavianis claim ancient Rome for Italians today. The mentioning of emotional patrimony suggests this. It also points out to their understanding of the historical event also from a political perspective. Throughout the film, the camera work, the background music and the script serve to affect the spectator and stimulate an empathic response in the way the spectator empathizes with the prisoners and consequently with Roman conspirators. By seeing that their assassination of Caesar, although a wrong solution to his tyranny, comes from noble and idealistic reasons and by seeing that they have changed their lives after this reenactment, the spectator is inclined perhaps even to forgive prisoners for what they have done in their real and cinematic lives.

Looking at the film in relation to the larger context of Tavianis' opus, there are some similarities with their previous work that help understand the films' evaluation of Caesar's assassination from a moral and political

perspective: the motifs, the political stance, dramaturgical structure, or the use of prison itself. In Bassi's view, "the sacrificial murder of Caesar, shot in a very stylized matter, echoes the mythical and ritual representation of history that the Tavianis famously employed in *The Night of the Shooting Stars* (1982), in their transfiguration of the Italian anti-Nazi Resistance as a Homeric battle" (Bassi 216, 188). The Tavianis are former communists and members of the Italian Communist Party, and proponents of right-wing totalitarian regimes are among their favourite villains in their films. Also in their latest film *Una questione privata* (*Rainbow: A Private Affair*, 2018) the story revolves around a (failed) partisan fighting the Nazis.

However, when it comes to *Caesar Must Die*, Bassi's comparison seems stretched, because the film is not comparing Caesar to a Nazi in any way. Even if it doesn't celebrate Caesar, the film is at least ambivalent about him. Although he is represented as a darker figure, at least darker than the conspirators, he is still a great Roman, a great politician and military commander, and he is *their* Caesar. Also, although the historical event may be considered heroic by the Tavianis, Caesar's killing within a prison by a gang member or a gang leader - as the performance is presented - is in this sense problematic because of the setting.

What the Tavianis' opus and political background do suggest is that they are in favour of the downtrodden and in *Caesar Must Die* they tend to present the political and

social elite around Brutus as the oppressed who conspire only to save the democracy. However, the Ides of March is not about the conflict between patricians and plebeians. In the historical event and in Shakespeare's *JC* the conflict is within aristocracy itself. Two films from 1970s, *St. Michael Had a Rooster* (1972) and *Allonsanfàn* (1974) have as their protagonists imprisoned revolutionaries. *Caesar Must Die* doesn't suggest that the prisoners who stage Shakespeare's play are unjustly imprisoned, but the film text does suggest that the conspirators' rebellion against Caesar is motivated by a just cause. This is evidenced also by an interview from the official DVD version of the film where Striano compares Brutus with Masaniello, "the heroic Neapolitan fisherman who led the ultimately unsuccessful revolt against Spanish rule in 1647" (Bassi 2016, 191). This historical comparison would make Brutus heroic, and Caesar a tyrant that needs be overthrown.

Furthermore, as Causo notes, the film "has a full dramaturgical structure, perfectly consistent with that of *Padre Padrone* (*My Father, My Master*, 1977)". He believes the aforementioned film to be similar to *Caesar Must Die* because, like prisoners, Gavino Ledda from *Padre Padrone* plays himself in the film (Causo n.d.). Although reluctantly, even Vittorio Taviani recognized the relationship between the two films stating that Ledda was "also prisoner in his life, in a way, and later he got to know art" (ANAC autori 2018, 49:00).

One can see that a lot of their films deal with people who they believe to be revolutionaries and who are in some points of their lives unjustly imprisoned. However, since Rebibbia prisoners are sentenced even for Mafia-related crimes it is unlikely that the Tavianis portray them personally as revolutionaries. Hence, the revolutionary aspect is embodied by Romans and framed by Shakespeare. The 'revolution' the prisoners lead is on a personal level. They radically change their own lives: they repent for crimes they committed and they find catharsis in and through art.

6.9. Back to the title: social and political context of production and distribution

Similarly to the aforementioned political and cinematic background of the Tavianis, the social and political context of the production and distribution of the film plays an important role in the interpretation of the film's meanings. One of the aspects of the film that has a direct reference to the its interpretation of Caesar's assassination and that has been unjustly neglected by scholars is the title of the film, an example of intertextuality. On a metacinematic level, the title may have been an intramedial reference to the title of another film loosely inspired by Shakespeare, Andrzej Bartkowiak's *Romeo Must Die* (2000), in which the protagonist, an ex policeman, tries to avenge his brother killed by a criminal gang. Reading the Tavianis' film in relation to this one, it would set up the comparison for the prisoners with noble and idealistic ex police man who turns

to a wrong solution. That solution, the murder, is actually less contested in Bartkowiak's film than in *Caesar Must Die*.

Furthermore, some analyses of the title of the film have been historical, and critics have also understood the title as a reference to a variety of political assassinations that have taken place in Italy and that were connected in some way to Julius Caesar. One such assassination is that of Pellegrino Rossi, a very influential politician in Italy and France in the first half of the 19th century. According to the notorious and longtime prime minister of Italy, Giulio Andreotti, Rossi's assassination was similar to that of Julius Caesar. In his book, entitled similarly to Taviani's film, '*Ore 13: il Ministro deve morire*', Andreotti writes that "Rossi died stabbed to death on the staircase of the Chancellery, while he set out to give a speech, perhaps resolute, in the Parliament that reopened its session that day. The pope Pius IX that same morning told him to be on his guard, because there were so many enemies of his, in their fury capable of infamous crimes" (as cited in Mancino 2012, 33). Scholars report that people cheered the assassins as liberators and they yelled "Blessed be the hand that stabbed the tyrant" (Evans 2017; Kertzer 2018, 103). Not long after Rossi's assassination, for a short period of time a "Roman Republic" governed by a triumvirate was constituted. Rossi's political and economic views were conservative, making him unappealing to revolutionary Romans in the emblematic events of the year 1848 (Carandini II.11.1). This would be a reference that may conform to Taviani's political views, although there is no

sign in the film or in the para-text of this parallel being strongly evoked.

It is more likely the Tavianis may have referred to a much more recent political assassination, that of Italy's "new Caesar" - Aldo Moro - that appalled the whole country (as cited in Mancino 2012, 35). Similarly to Caesar's assassination in the context of Roman history, Moro's assassination is considered "the key episode at genealogical level of contemporary Italian history" (ibi.d). Moro too was assaulted in morning on his way to the Senate, on the day after the Ides in 1978. A renowned Italian journalist, Carmine Pecorelli, compared Moro's kidnapping with Caesar's assassination (as cited in Mancino 2012, 35). On the same note, Sergio Flamigni, "a former Italian senator and maximum expert of Moro's assassination", made a connection between the assassinations of Julius Caesar and Aldo Moro in the title of his book "*Le idi di marzo. Il delitto Moro secondo Pecorelli*" - The Ides of March. The Moro crime according to Pecorelli" (ibid.). Also, the famous Italian magistrate and honorary president of the Italian Supreme Court, Ferdinando Imposimato, published in 2008 a book on Moro's assassination with a title similar to that of the Tavianis' film - '*Doveva morire*' – '(He) Had to Die' (Mancino 2012, 35).

Comparisons of Caesar and Aldo Moro seem not to have been unusual and his assassination imposed an unwritten ban on staging Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for quite some time in Italy. As Tempera notes, it was too dangerous

because “the shocking photographs of Moro's bullet-ridden body encouraged parallels with Caesar's death, [...] and in the following years, with left wing extremists engaging in more knee-cappings and killings and right wing extremists planting bombs in public places, no mainstream director would have touched *Julius Caesar* with a barge pole” (as cited in Bassi 2016, 184). It is highly improbable the Tavianis or other aforementioned authors would ever consider Aldo Moro a tyrant, but it is possible they evoked his kindapping and assassination without considering him to be a tyrannical Caesar.

Even if the directors are not making crude parallels between different tyrannical Caesars from Italian political history, the film is evoking those connections in a way that allows for greater subtlety. The evidence from the para-text proves that the Tavianis, Cavalli and Striano, if not the whole cast, had contemporary Italian politics in mind when they were making the film and thinking about tyrants (Crespi 2012; Servizio Pubblico 2013, 7:20; Montorfano 2012, 49; Bassi 2016, 214). Be it perhaps inspired by Silvio Berlusconi, definitely a controversial the protagonist on Italian political stage since 1994 and also connected in the media with the criminal organizations evoked in the film, or another Italian politician, this shows how the film establishes a connection between Julius Caesar and Italians today, because the film text alone suggests that the context of reference is Italy and not any other country (Montorfano 2012, 49; Bassi 2016, 214).

Moreover, the intertextuality of the title of the film has another layer, where the film itself served as the source text. The film must have been known to the former mayor of Narni, Giulio Cesare Proietti (*nomen omen*), an ex Communist, who recently published a book entitled similarly to the Tavianis' film – *Germanico deve morire* (Germanicus Must Die) – in which he celebrates Germanicus as “a great general, and a fine intellectual” (Bimillenario Germanico 2019). This evaluation of Germanicus matches onto Cavalli's description of Julius Caesar from the film, both at his meeting with the prison director and prisoners at the beginning of the film and later in the library scene. Also, this evaluation of Caesar and Germanicus is similar to how reenactors describe and see Caesar and other strong, successful Romans. So, in the title and in the content of his book Proietti reappropriates not only the title of the film, but also a part of its understanding and presentation of Caesar. His description of Germanicus matches even more onto the reenactors' fascination with Caesar. This is to show how strong, virile Romans like Caesar and Germanicus, both successful and famous military commanders, politicians and writers, loved by many Romans in their time, both of whose deaths are surrounded by a lot of controversy, are celebrated and admired today in Italy by a lot of people from the political left, ex-communists and the people with far-right views.

Even if there are no crude references to contemporary Italian politics in the film text, the para-text confirms that

the participants had these references in mind. This all refers to the fact that it is impossible to consider Caesar's assassination and its enactments in Italy without looking into political context that always influences the reception of Caesar and his assassination. Looking at the title of the film in relation to these para-texts, they support the interpretation of the title as a reflection of the directors' questioning the effectiveness of the assassination as a solution to tyranny.

In Shakespeare's play, Caesar is shown fragile, old, suffering from the loss of hearing, and he's sort of a ghost of himself. It's his spirit that kind of controls things, not the fragile body, and because of that the conspirators make a mistake in killing Caesar, because when they get rid of his body, they don't get rid of the spirit. Antony simply takes over as heir and what Rome gets is another tyrant. So Shakespeare's play is about the danger of the tyrannicide, so there's a sense that if someone gets murdered, there has to be revenge and someone murders the assassin himself. This is what 'Antony' is doing within the prison. He's saying that even if Caesar was bad and they killed him, he was someone dear to him and he needs to be revenged, so there's the idea that murder begets murder. The film builds on this ambiguity inherent to the play. Although the Tavianis present 'Caesar' as a darker, arrogant figure, murdering him is still problematic. The Tavianis do not provide any concrete reasons for his assassination and the film does not unequivocally justify his killing. Quite the contrary, the shaping of the film interrogates its title and it

seems to address the issue whether killing 'Caesar' (or anyone else) is justified rather than saying that (this) murder *is* justified. So, *Caesar Must Die* is in a sense not an exclamation, but a question – Must Caesar Die? – diametrically opposite from the message of the reenactment that indirectly says that Caesar must not have died. The film is also demonstrating how enacting the story of the Ides enables the participating prisoners to address that very issue, the justification of both the assassination of Caesar and the assassinations some of them witnessed, took part in or were in some way affected by. So even when someone is a villain, there is a big question - posed by Shakespeare - if his murder is justified. 'Brutus' and other prisoners are reluctant about the killing, they are tormented throughout the film, 'Brutus' perhaps significantly more than others. 'Conspirators' get rid of Caesar, but they are not able to get rid of his spirit that continues being present in the play and torments 'Brutus' in his tent at Philippi, making 'Brutus' kill himself in the end. So, the moral ambiguity of the film asking the question 'is it right to kill anyone' fits with actors being imprisoned, and there are issues of sympathy for them and understanding of their containment in prison, and of the sense that somehow enacting Caesar's assassination helps them, because through enacting it they realize that murder is not a solution. It's 'Brutus' who asks himself throughout the film 'Must Caesar Die'? 'Brutus' reflects on what's at stake here in the way that perhaps the others don't. And his agony is also about what he has done in his past life. It is not strange

that the film is structured in this way, because reenactment is used as a method even in psychotherapy for the purposes of facing traumatic experiences and therapeutic effect of theater is one of the most important topics in the context of 'prison Shakespeare' and 'prison theater'.

Secondly, another cinematic analysis of the title of the film does not focus on its ambiguity, but it builds on the republican political and ideological perspective. It recognizes the title of the film as an indicator of “a staunchly Republican play, a play about the death of a dictator, the inescapable necessity of the murder of a tyrant”. This Calbi's analysis connects the film to Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* (1953), that Calbi sees as another republican narrative too (Calbi 2014, 245, 250). However, a connection with Orson Welles' modern dress performance of *JC* would be more appropriate in this sense, as the subtitles of Welles's adaptation is “Death of a Dictator”. Welles's adaptation showed that unless people are taught what's wrong with dictators and how best to respond to a dictator or a villain, if one kills him, what happens afterwards is that nothing changes for the better, and another dictator comes in the place of the previous.

6.10. Prisoners' evaluation of the conspirators' motivation

The analysis of the film text and para-texts so far has shown that the film provides an evaluation of the historical event in a way that, similarly to Shakespeare's play itself, it questions the political and moral grounds of the conspiracy and it reflects on its efficiency. Besides the film text that

provides the evaluation of the historical event by the directors, prisoners also question the conspiracy in these terms, and their reflections are included in the official DVD version of the film. Prisoners have been highly influenced by the directors' view on the historical event and they have talked about Caesar and his assassination in more or less similar ways to Tavianis. Besides the previously mentioned comparison of Brutus with Masaniello, Striano stated that Brutus turned to assassination to safeguard "the freedom of the people (Caesar Must Die, DVD Interviews, 2013). Striano is also aware of Dante's condemnation of Brutus, but he disagrees with it, thinking that Brutus "did what was necessary" (Striano 2016e, 172). For Striano, Brutus is an "introverted, pensive character, someone who, at the end of a long reflection, chooses to embrace the lesser evil, the killing of the tyrant in the search for freedom for all others" (Montorfano 2015, 91).

However, Striano's evaluation was not shared by all the prisoners who acted in the film, at least it had not been before making of the film. This is suggested by the interviews from the DVD version of the film. For example, Vincenzo Gallo casually mentioned that participating in the film "changed his opinion of Brutus's character because almost all of them have always seen Brutus as a traitor, the person who had killed his father to acquire power, to have everything. But when they studied it and read Shakespeare they realised that Brutus is a character engaged in a struggle with himself. It's as if he's two people, one driven by his love for his father, although he's not his father [...]"

and the other by his love for Rome [...] Brutus gives his life and risks everything in one day for freedom" (Caesar Must Die, DVD interviews, 2013). Similarly, Rega stated that Cassius "was very reflexive and disquieting because of what he had to face in order to save the democracy (TG La7 2013, 2:20). Also in a similar way Bonetti seems to recognize the complexity of the historical event. In his view, "it's not simply a betrayal [...] the plotters aren't simply the perpetrators of a murder or the liberators of Rome. They are people on a journey [...] to convince themselves, to try and convince and persuade their companions".

Looking at their reflections, one can see how the actors mirror the evaluation of the conspirators that the film offers. What is important here is the subtlety with which they connect the historical event with their own experiences. Both Striano and Rega have stated several times that they turned to crime only because it seemed there was no any other route to take. Another example of the prisoners' connecting the historical event with their own experiences is Striano's statement I quote in the beginning of the chapter, about the conspirators being the Camorra clan. Striano and Bonetti actually said that the Tavianis encouraged them to connect Shakespeare's play with their own experiences (Caesar Must Die, DVD interviews, 2013).

However, during my research I have found a video recording that compromises this view of the conspirators. It

is from 2014 and it shows Cosimo Rega commemorating the anniversary of the Ides of March (Pistone 2014). He's shown in his plain everyday clothes, a jumper and shirt, wearing a laurel wreath with a red ribbon on his head, standing on the ruins in front of the temple of Caesar in the Roman Forum, exactly where reenactors commemorate Caesar's assassination by performing Brutus' and Mark Antony's orations. Carrying a microphone just like the reenactors and accompanied by some local theater directors and actors, Rega here also performs Mark Antony's oration from III.II. A few of his companions that are following his performance also wear this ridiculous laurel wreath that contrasts their plain clothes, and they participate in the performance in a way that as common citizens from Shakespeare's play they urge Rega to read Caesar's will. Unlike in the film, Rega performs the oration in standard Italian, however somewhat locally accented and with minor dialectal and slang inflections. He seems a little bit shy and uncomfortable in the video, perhaps because of the audience watching him, and his performance in the film was definitely much better. Actually, very few people are watching closely his performance. The camera shows for a brief moment groups of tourists around the site who follow what their tour guides are saying to them rather than listening to 'Mark Antony'. This is very different from the reenactment where 'exotic' costumes and paraphernalia attract tourists' attention, and it results in cellphones live streaming them on social media. It's also somewhat strange that even the tour guides do not stop with their groups to

follow Rega's performance, something they usually do when reenactors perform, even if they do it in Italian, and most of the tourists are not Italians. The fact that he performs the oration in Italian, together with his lack of costume, may most probably be the reason why he didn't attract a crowd at the Forum.

What is important here is that, taken out of context this performance means something completely different from the film. Like reenactors' performance of the same oration at the same place and on the same day, his performance here implies he's celebrating Caesar. This suggests that prisoners do not necessarily share the same political views like the Tavianis, although in the time of the film making in the DVD interviews, as the para-texts above confirm, they do express evaluations of the event similar to film directors. Regardless of what Rega's intention was, isolated like that, the speech of Antony performed at that spot can become much more like what happens in the reenactment because without the structure of the Taviani film to make it work differently, this is the implication of the performance.

6.11. Identification with ancient Romans versus histrionics and protagonism

The analysis of the film text and the para-texts so far has shown that the film establishes close connections with Romans and Italians today. In this regard, there is a lot of data that suggests that it was not only the directors who established these connections – the Tavianis and Cavalli – but also prisoners themselves and, as stated above, they dig

in their own personal experiences (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin 2012, 17:30; Caesar Must Die 2013, 25:25; Montorfano 2015, 87; Pucci 2016, 348; Striano 2016e, 135; Rega 2017, 473). The instrument to achieve this level of identification in performance is the Stanislavski method, that is, “a deep adherence to the psychology of the character interpreted and the search for an emotional affinity with this, achieved through an intimate investigation of the prisoner's own past and experiences” and this is the method Cavalli uses in his work with the prisoners (Montorfano 2015, 66, 94). The second most important instrument is the language, that is the dialects used in the film, an expression of their identity and a vehicle to achieve the catharsis.

The implications of the way that the prisoners are encouraged to identify so directly with the characters in *JC* does not buy into ideas of Shakespeare's universality, suggesting that reading Shakespeare is a means to redemption and rehabilitation. On the contrary, we are meant to see this as evidence of transhistorically Italian traits and experiences that are mediated through Shakespeare. As Shakespeare draws upon a classical source, Plutarch, him personally being an English playwright is not a problem. In this way they establish a relationship with Romans, but using specific language like the Mafia-related speech, as shown in the previous sub-chapters, they also distinguish peculiarities of identity of contemporary Italy. They are 're-indigenising' *Julius Caesar*, taking him back from his place in English theatrical

traditions and placing him back into an Italian context (Hutcheon 2007). As Paolo Taviani reported, “the prisoners said ‘Shakespeare is a friend of ours because 500 years ago he already spoke of our tragedies, of our pain’ [...] and for them ‘all these Shakespearean characters,’ they told us, ‘we know them, they were in the reality from which we terribly came’” (Film at Lincoln Center 2012, 9:40; Pipolo 2012, 43; Tassi 2012). Even Striano expressed something similar from his perspective, saying that “when the Tavianis came to prison to make *Caesar Must Die*, they watched the prisoners. They looked at them and said “it’s crazy, it’s them, Cinna, Trebonius, Cassius, the conspirators in the book who killed Julius Caesar, here they are, it’s them, they have their own eyes, their faces’” (Striano 2017, 13:36).

Their identification with the historical personages was almost total. Even in their free time, when they were not rehearsing, they continued using their theatrical names just like reenactors many times do (Striano 2016e, 88, 126; Montorfano 2015, 93). Connections between the historical event and the biographies of prisoners turned out to be an effective marketing tool, and these connections were raised on various occasions. For example, when asked in an interview if there was a link between the personages from *JC* and the prisoner actors, Cavalli stated that “Shakespeare, through their biography, takes on meanings that the academic actors cannot give” (Ganci 2012; Canessa 2012; Bassi 2016, 194; Cavecchi 2017, 7). This is advocated also by different scholars and critics (Vistilli 2011; Chiti 2012; Grattoggi 2012; Spaggy 2012; Borrione 2014, 13). This

was advocated also by other theater directors, e.g. Luca de Filippo, the son of famous Italian theater director and playwright Eduardo de Filippo, who staged one of his father's play in a theater in Rome at the same time prisoners did at Rebibbia and he supposedly stated that the prisoners were better than his professional actors (Striano 2016e, 95, 97-98). Their acting competences were confirmed not only by critical acclaim, but also by different prestigious awards the prisoners received for their acting, such as the *Silver Ribbon of the Year* by the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists in 2012 or the *FIPRESCI award* at the Palm Springs International Film Festival in 2013 for, as it is explained “embodying roles with several levels of dramatic meaning, and drawing them together to achieve a compelling emotional resolution” (La Repubblica 2012a; IMDb n.d.b). Salvatore Striano also received a *Special Award* at the Primavera del Cinema Italiano Festival 2012 (IMDb n.d.b). It is challenging, then, to compare the award-winning acting competences of the prisoners and those of historical reenactors, although even reenactors attend acting workshops on weekly basis all year long, led by professional theatrical directors and actors. Striano, for example, said that he “never wanted to be a protagonist, although Brutus actually is one” (Montorfano 2012, 92). However, he definitely became a protagonist not only of this film, but also of the Italian cultural and social scene and media, where he is regularly present. Cosimo Rega, on the other hand, in his autobiography admitted to his “innate histrionics” and almost and urge to “play and show

off”(Rega 2017, 335). This is definitely comparable to a lot of reenactors. His histrionics was also recognized by Cavalli and a journalist who interviewed him after he published the autobiography (Cavalli 2004; Caiffa 2017). On one hand, this histrionics points out to the playfulness that both prisoners and reenactors demonstrate. As Striano said, “the play, the game, allows you to suspend reality and build an alternative, even in the present of that landfill, of that place that makes you dirty and enflames what remains of you in the prison” (Montorfano 2015, 93). On the other hand, it points out to the wish to exhibit oneself and show off in front of the public. This is what connects the reenactors and prisoners and points to something else they have in common, wish to become somebody else. As Sasà Striano said, he “didn't accept himself anymore. Theatre helped him to refuse the Sasà who had committed the crimes; I wanted to be a character, different from me”, Striano pointed out. In the same interview Antonio Frasca added that “when they're on stage, when they're acting, it is a moment of freedom for them” (aiutoaiutocom 2012, 00:10). Because of the crimes they did and the consequences, they desperately want to be somebody else, and they succeed in this as much it is possible, more than historical reenactors do. Even the phenomenon of their moving up on the social scale is greater than the reenactors'. Although the latter collaborate with high-ranked politicians and get support from presidents of Italy and even the president of the European Parliament, in their everyday lives, the prisoners' movement on social scale is more evident as they

are persons locked up in a high-security prison without almost any civil rights who, because of the film, overcome rigid hierarchies and boundaries of the prison system, and even become successful and esteemed actors and public intellectuals despite the stigmata and challenges the society impose on them. Their performances empower both the reenactors and the prisoners, it makes them the protagonists of their stories and their lives, and it brings a substantial cultural capital, sometimes even financial capital. Also, like Roman reenactors, prisoners in their theater tend to be their own audience. However, with the success of Cavalli's project and Tavianis' film, their audience became global.

Furthermore, since Cosimo Rega started the project of prison theater, he turned to a sort of their theater manager, leader and representative to the authorities, although it was not easy to impose himself on them as their leader (Rega 2017, 41). In the context of the reenactment, his role matches onto the role of the founder of the *GSR*, who has been the president of the association ever since the foundation. Hierarchy comes with the tensions, and it seems that Rega used to be jealous of Striano, whom others liked the most, and who seemed to be the most talented actor among them (Striano 2016e, 102, 114, 119, 138). And tensions of this kind are present on the reenactment scene and they result even in tumultuous discussions sometimes and big variations in numbers of members of the association.

What is more, the film influenced well the relationship between Striano and Rega, who today collaborate on different projects together. Theater and the film eventually enabled them to change the rigid hierarchies of the prison system, especially that of the high-security wing, and they were able, as mentioned before, to create a community among themselves (Arcuri 2011, 103; Montorfano 2015, 87-88). Since they started the theater project, and especially during the making of the film, even their relationship with prison guards got better (CSC – Cineteca Nazionale 2018, 5:20; Striano 2016e, 126). By doing the reenactment, the performers are also enabled to transcend the hierarchic boundaries, but in a different way. Although reenactment builds a sense of community among them, their hierarchic structure is present at all times. What they seem to achieve more, at least in their own eyes, is the movement on the social ladder in a larger context. They are admired by their peers, tourists, even high ranked politicians, and by merging of all these different kinds of support for what they do, they use it to achieve social prestige in the larger context.

6.12. Audience Reception

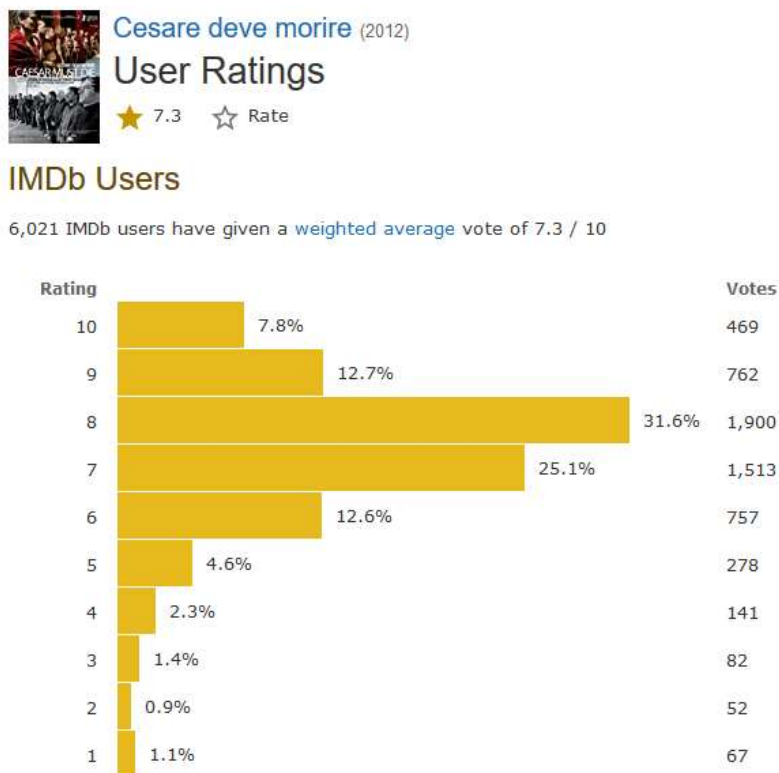
The aforementioned international awards and praises by different scholars and journalists show how positively the film was received in Italy and abroad. When it comes to reception and consumption via social networks, admittedly, Facebook here does not hold the first place. Since the film is a commercial product it is clear that it

cannot be live streamed and consumed via Facebook free of charge. Also, when the film was made, in 2012, streaming films via Facebook was definitely not a trend just yet. In fact, any kind of live streaming from the prison demands a special permission granted by the Italian Minister of Justice himself. This was demonstrated by the case of a screening and streaming of the film in the Rebibbia prison theater in 2016 on the occasion of a special “virtual” meeting of the prisoners and protagonists of the film with the students from Sapienza University of Rome. The screening was followed by a Q-and-A session with the university students. The project proved to be a technological challenge and the Q-and-A didn’t go smoothly, quite the contrary, as it is visible on its video recording available on YouTube (LaRibalta 2016). To this day, this video recording has been visualized by 2835 users of which only 19 persons “liked” the video. There were zero dislikes and only one comment, of Fabio Rizzuto, *Strato* from the Tavianis’ film, who thanked the participants for “the nice experience”.

Furthermore, the social network that is predominantly used in the film world is IMDb – the Internet Movie Database. Particularly for this film, the platform proved to be a fruitful place of reception. According to the data coming from IMDb, more than six thousand registered users rated the movie, with the average vote of 7,3/10 (IMDb n.d.c; Image 35). Among these, 469 or 7,8% rated the film 10/10; 762 or 12,7% gave a “9” to the film; 1,900 users or 31,6% of all the voters gave an “8” to the film; 1,513 users (25,1%) gave a “7” to the film (ibid.). This means that 77,2%

or 4,644 users gave really high votes to the film. In contrast, only 757 users (12,6%) that gave a “6” to the film didn’t like it too much, and only 620 or 10,3% of 6,021 voters didn’t like the film (ibid.).

Image 35. Cesare Deve Morire. User Ratings. IMDb. Screenshot.



The "Rating By Demographic" analysis shows that among the aforementioned 6,021 voters, only 3 voters were underage and they were all male. They gave the average vote of "3,3" to the film. More precisely, one of these users gave an "8" to the film, one gave a "2" and the third user gave the lowest grade, "1" (IMDb n.d.d). The data suggest that the film didn't attract any underage audience and that they didn't particularly like the film. Secondly, the data show that 4,289 voters or 71,23% of all the voters were male, and they gave an average "7,3" grade to the film. This means that the remaining 955 or 15,86% of voters were women, who gave an average "7,3" grade to the film. Thirdly, 1,098 or 18,23% of voters belong to "18-29" age group. They gave an average "7.5" grade. Among these there were 875 men (14,53% of all the voters), who gave the same mark. The remaining 209 female voters from this age group graded the film slightly better, they gave it "7,6" (3,47% of all the voters). Fourthly, the relative majority - 2,823 or 46,89% of voters - belong to "30-44" age group. They gave an average "7,3" grade to the film. Among these, 2,282 voters (37,9% of all the voters) were male. They gave an average "7.2" vote to the film. The remaining 492 women from the same age group (8,17% of all the voters) again gave a slightly higher grade, "7.5". In the fifth place there is the last age group of voters, those are 45 years old or older. This group comprises 1,213 registered voters (20,14% of all the voters) who gave an average "7,2" vote. Among these, 994 users were men (16,5% of all voters), and they gave an average "7,1" vote. The remaining 204 women from this

age group (0,39% of all the voters) gave the highest average vote to the film, “7,7”. This shows that women from this age group like the film the most among all the 6021 registered voters of the film, even if the film attracted the least spectators from this particular age and gender group, if we exclude underage film viewers.

In addition, IMDb recognized also 422 users from the United States of America, 7,01% of all users, who gave the average “7,3” grade. On the other hand, 4,075 of voters that make 67,68% of all the users, were recognized as coming from outside US. They also gave the average “7,3” vote. The remaining 1,524 of voters (25,31% of all the voters) didn’t list their country of origin and were therefore excluded from this geographical categorization (IMDb n.d.c).

Image 36. Cesare Deve Morire. Rating By Demographic. IMDb. *Screenshot.*

Rating By Demographic

	All Ages	<18	18-29	30-44	45+
All	7.3 6,021	3.3 3	7.5 1,098	7.3 2,823	7.2 1,213
Males	7.3 4,289	3.3 3	7.5 875	7.2 2,282	7.1 994
Females	7.5 955	-	7.6 209	7.5 492	7.7 204
Top 1000 Voters		US Users		Non-US Users	
5.9 127		7.3 422		7.3 4,075	

Finally, there were also 15 longer written reviews that gave in total 98 of the maximum 150 points (IMDb n.d.e). The average vote was then “6,5”, one reviewer didn’t leave a numerical rating of the film, one gave a weak “5” rating, and two reviewers gave the lowest vote, “1”. The remaining 10 reviews gave very high grades to the film. In addition, among 258 users that engaged with these reviews and rated them, 151 users found them useful, whereas the majority of people both engaged with and found useful the most positive reviews (IMDb n.d.e). Expectedly, all the reviews are written in English. These reviews are very elaborate and thoughtfully written and they leave a clear impression that they are written by people who are in certain ways participants of the film industry, e.g. several reviewers attended the premieres of the film at renowned festivals and are not average homeviewers (ibid.). So the reviews too are very cinematic and literary, and discuss the acting style, filming techniques, relationship with the Shakespearean text and the role of the prisoners. Even so, they are not in-depth (IMDb n.d.e). They also allude to 143 professional external reviews written by film critics, or those on a similar website – film social network – Metacritic, that gave the average “7,7” grade (as cited in IMDb n.d.f).

7. Case Study III: Fabio Cavalli's *Julius Caesar* at the Rebibbia Prison Theater

7.1. Introduction

Following the success of *Caesar Must Die* (2012) at the International Film Festival in Berlin in 2012, Fabio Cavalli staged public rehearsals/readings of Shakespeare's play at the 350-seat theater of the prison Rebibbia. These public rehearsals were acclaimed by the critics that managed to get tickets to these rare performances (Garcea 2012; Grasso 2012; Di Bagno 2013; Di Brigida 2013; Brucoli 2013). The dichotomy between the myriad of critiques of the Tavianis' film and only a handful of those dedicated to Cavalli's theatrical staging reveals power relations between Italian cinema industry's giants like the Tavianis and their distributor Nanni Moretti on one side, and Cavalli's theatrical research centre *La Ribalta Centro Studi Enrico Maria Salerno* and a public prison on the other side. It also points out to the differences between the products, the Tavianis' film being a product intended for the mass market, while Cavalli's staging is a more artistic and therapeutic endeavour intended for prisoners, their families, university students, school children, Roman theatrical audience and intellectuals who follow Rebibbia's theater. Since it is incredibly difficult to get tickets for Rebibbia performances, it is not strange that scholars have not had the chance at all to look into this adaptation.

7.2. *Integrated Analysis and Interpretation*

Although the film is based on Cavalli's staging of *Julius Caesar* in the prison theater, there are many important differences between the two products. Firstly, when looking at the two scripts, unlike the film, Cavalli's theatrical staging performs many more scenes from Shakespeare's play, but not all however, making it more obvious that this is a staging of Shakespeare's play and not a theatricalization of prisoners' lives, like the film appears to suggest at many times. However, Cavalli doesn't stage III.III. with Cinna the poet, IV.I. the meeting between Antony, Octavius and Lepidus; IV.II. when Cassius comes to Brutus' tent, and the whole act V. The reason for not staging the battle at the Philippi was technical, as Cavalli told me in an unpublished interview in September 2019. The scene demanded too many people and props to be carried out as a part of a theatrical staging and he referred the audience to the scene in the Tavianis' film. Also, the actors don't perform always the whole scenes Cavalli decides to stage, some parts are omitted, usually with secondary characters. In addition, Cavalli's choice of organizing the narrative sequences in his theatrical staging differs both from the Tavianis' film and Shakespeare's play itself. In example, after 'Mark Antony's' short speech over 'Caesar's' dead body, Cavalli stages the fight scene between 'Cassius' and 'Brutus' at the Philippi and only after that 'Brutus' and 'Mark Antony' deliver their orations from the Forum. Even more importantly, Cavalli's theatrical adaptation finishes with Mark Antony's oration

like the historical reenactment and this chapter will show that his theatrical adaptation actually portrays Caesar somewhat similarly to the reenactors. Like in the reenactment, he is presented as a great Roman, and the arrogance attributed to him by Shakespeare's play is contested in this staging in an innovative way. As the chapter will show, the roles and motivations of the conspirators and Caesar are in a certain way inverted.

7.3. Non-Shakespearean scene

On that note, an important difference lies in the usage of non-Shakespearean scenes. While these scenes make the film the story of the prisoners, Cavalli writes only one full length non-Shakespearean scene for his theatrical staging, “a nocturnal dialogue between Cicero and Caesar in the night before the murder” (Image 19) that also doesn't exist in historical sources. Even if he says he added this scene “because the prisoners complained that the parts of Cicero and Caesar were too small”, this scene is important as it portrays the complexity of Caesar, recognized by Cavalli even more than by the play itself (Di Fabio 2015, 167-168; Cavalli 2019). Cavalli adds other non-Shakespearean lines to his adaptation that are indispensable for his evaluation of the historical Caesar.

In this 5-minute scene Cicero and Caesar talk about Caesar's fainting at the Luparcal feast. Cicero, played by Francesco De Masi ('Trebonius' in *Caesar Must Die*) believes Caesar orchestrated Antony's attempts to crown him, but Caesar is disgusted with the thought because he would

never do something so reckless (Cavalli 2013a 11:00). Cicero teases him for his “unlimited power” but Caesar disagrees by saying that “without the right information, the 'power' itself has no power”. He is still confused and under the impression of the whole event. Onomatopoeic sounds of river flowing, wind blowing and a battle create an acoustic background and imply the historicity of the discussion. Caesar raises his voice and a sense of tension builds up. Cicero warns him that “the Gallic war followed him to Rome and here it manifests itself in politics,” concluding that Caesar “did well to refuse the crown”. Caesar fervently complains that he misses “gratitude, love and admirations” by his people that he “well deserved”. Instead, the people are against him now. Cicero warns him that “his ideas and people's hopes are perhaps not the same and they don't expect him to take the crown”. Suspensful music enhances the importance and seriousness of the scene. Caesar is irritated and loses patience, he starts swearing: “What the fuck do they (the people) know about it? What do they understand about politics? Even I cannot understand it anymore”. He says he's “just tired”, and repeats that he “wants to have some gratitude and love, and if not, they can all go to hell if they don't like him”. He raises his voice and gets fairly angry, and Cicero is now angry too and responds with a quarrelsome tone that not everybody likes him, that he doesn't like him. They fight. Caesar threatens him that “if anything happens, he'll be the first on the list to pay the price”. Cicero corrects him by saying that “if anything happens, Caesar will pay the price first, and

Cicero, like always, may come in second". After this outburst of emotions, both of them sit down, and Caesar resignedly and silently says he's "not sure of anything anymore"(Cavalli 2013a 11:00).

Image 19. A non-Shakespearean scene with Cicero and Caesar. *La libertà repubblicana*. Film still.



This scene points out to Cavalli's interpretation of the historical event. Besides being familiar with the historical event thanks to his education and the fact that the story of the Ides of March belongs to the cultural DNA in Italy, Cavalli studied the Ides of March for almost one year before making the film and staging the play. In an unpublished interview I conducted with him in September 2019, he stated that he studied the both the ancient sources, predominantly Plutarch, and contemporary interpretations

of the historical event, especially Luciano Canfora's extraordinary book on Caesar entitled *Giulio Cesare – Il dittatore democratico* – a democratic or “People's Dictator” as it is stated its English edition. In his book Canfora recognizes the complexity of Caesar and building on Canfora's analysis, Cavalli doubts and reassesses the motivations of the conspirators. The fact that he is not convinced by their supposed republican values and democratic ideals is hinted even more in his theatrical staging than in the Tavianis' film. This all makes his adaptation not only an adaptation of Shakespeare's play, but also an interpretation of the complexity of the historical event itself by way of studying and interpreting both ancient and modern historical sources. Here he represents a visionary Caesar, once a great military commander and successful politician, now old and tired, whose bitterness doesn't derive from an overarching ambition and self-delusion, but from his disappointment with the Romans not understanding his dream of Rome.

7.4. Differences in relation to the film

The fact that it takes place on the stage of a theater makes this adaptation different from a sort of a real-life story and a discussion of the life in prison like *Caesar Must Die*. Cavalli's play doesn't refer to the Italian organized crime and to prisoners' previous lives and is therefore largely different from the Tavianis' film. The DVD version of the rehearsal I received from Cavalli somewhat evokes historical films. In fact, an “assistant director” character

(played by Antonio Giannone) has been implemented in the play and its two Cavalli's filmic versions. His role was meta-theatrical as he was introducing the actors, various stages of the play, and leading the audience in the theater and the films' spectators through the play similarly to the omniscient narrator of Hollywood's historical Roman films. He also mirrors the narrator in the historical reenactment that leads the spectators into the scenes.

Furthermore, the gender issue is another aspect where Cavalli's seems to be truer to the play than the Tavianis. While the film completely omits all the scenes with female characters, Cavalli decided to employ actresses in his staging. Daniela Marazita played Calpurnia in a public rehearsal from June 2012 (Sales 2012; Garcea 2012). Francesca Rotolo played the role of Portia in another rehearsal (Van Der Woodsen 2018). This also points to the fact that the goal of the theatrical staging was not the discussion of masculinity and the life in prison but the staging of the play itself.

Moreover, another element that makes Cavalli's play different than the Tavianis' film is the language used. Throughout the performance both standard Italian and dialects can be heard. When it comes to using standard language, although we are mostly talking about academic Italian comprehensible to contemporary audiences, at times archaic expressions are used. However, usually it is 'Caesar' who speaks in standard language, making it an attribute of a social and cultural prestige, as opposed to

vulgar dialects used by the conspirators. What is more, the prisoners tend to paraphrase, repeat and add their own to Shakespeare's lines. This occurs at different moments in the performance, and it seems they are doing it to fill in the silence as there was some kind of *horror vacui* on the stage. Although in total the language strategy employed in the film was reflected in the theatrical staging, some differences in dialects spoken by the characters are caused by different role allocation, and this also makes the play different from *Caesar Must Die*. As Montorfano precisely notes, "Antonio Frasca, who is Antony in the cinema, is given the role of Brutus, since Striano is no longer in prison, while Juan Bonetti, Decius in the film, is Antony in the theatre. This latest evolution [with a cast corresponding to that of the video *La Libertà Repubblicana*] [...] is still different from the one in the script that includes Bonetti as Brutus, Frasca as Antony [as in the cinema], Gallo as Decius; the flyer of the public rehearsal from May 18, 2011 provides yet another cast: Giacomo Silvano in the role of Cassius, Bonetti and Frasca in the roles of Brutus and Antony, just like in the public rehearsal from 18 June 2012 (according to Laura Sales' review on saltinaria.it, 20 June 2012). Cavalli explains this flexibility in assigning roles with the needs of the vehicle, theatrical or cinematographic, such as to require one actor or another, and with the need to involve always different inmates in the company" (Montorfano 2012, 30). Curiously, in the video recording of the public rehearsal from 15 May 2013 I received from the director Cavalli, he is the one who is playing Caesar and

not Arcuri (Di Brigida 2013), as Arcuri was released from prison just several days before the performance.

Another difference between *Caesar Must Die* and Cavalli's staging are the costumes. There is no Roman-like clothing and the actors are wearing dark everyday clothes all the time. However, some of them are wearing formal clothes. Giovanni Arcuri, who played 'Caesar' in the theatrical staging as well, in *La Libertà Repubblicana* - another associating video project - wears a black shirt and a beige jumper over his shoulders, whose drapery subtly evokes those of a Roman toga. He wears an elegant watch like in the film, and somewhat looks like a member of Roman bourgeoisie. Even Fabio Cavalli, who played 'Caesar' when Arcuri was released, wore a black suit that distinguished him from mostly shabby conspirators.

The formal clothing of the protagonists together with minimalist set that evokes a conference room almost mirrors Rob Melrose's Obama-like staging from the same year. Only two giant Roman-like columns that flank the left and right side of the stage remember the Tavianis' film. An important element of the set design is also the lighting. Bright-to-dark red light on the giant screen in the background contributes to emphasizing crucial moments of the play, like the assassination scene. The scene differs largely from Caesar's assassination in the narrow and squalid court yard of the film. In Cavalli's play, Caesar is killed by black shadows illuminated by red light in the background, and this is incredibly similar to the

aformentioned Melrose's Obama-like staging. This is particularly important because the two adaptations, although very similar in these important aspects, seem to argue contrasting things about Caesar.

Finally, among the key strategies of Cavalli's staging there is also music, again different from the music in the Tavianis' film. Franco Moretti, the author, seems to use a wider array of instruments, and the music seems to be performed by some sort of orchestra. Contrary to the film, whose music background is dominated by saxophones, here instruments of other groups (keyboard, string and percussion) seem to be used equally. However, there seems to be a note or two too many at certain moments.

The chapter first looks into the DVD version of the public rehearsal from 15 May 2013 I received from the director Cavalli. The DVD version of a public rehearsal of the play from the Rebibbia prison-theater is not a raw video recording. As it opens, the captions present Cavalli's organization behind organization and the production of the adaptation, *La Ribalta Centro Studi Enrico Maria Salerno*, and its collaborators, the prison authorities, *la Direzione della C.C. Roma Rebibbia Nuovo Complesso*. Also, at the end of the performance the complete cast follows like in any regular DVD version of a film. The DVD (01:23:35) is entitled *Giulio Cesare a Rebibbia* and is presented as Cavalli's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. This all shows at the very beginning not only that we're not dealing with the Taviani's film in any way, but that this is a rounded product in itself.

The chapter looks into the film text and analyses the performance from the perspective of *Caesar Must Die* and from the perspective of issues of the historical reenactment and subjective engagement with Roman history. While analyzing the mise-en-scene, camera work, editing and sound, the chapter also looks in which ways the performance engages and alters the source text, Shakespeare's play.

Then the chapter looks at para-text, another film based on Cavalli's adaptation of the play, entitled *La Libertà Repubblicana - Epilogo – Tirannicidio* and compares it to the DVD version of the play.

7.5. A public rehearsal of the play

The DVD starts from the beginning of Shakespeare's play, with the buzzing of the 'common Romans' around the seated audience in the prison theater and with the tribunes 'Marullus' and 'Flavius' (Antonio Giannone) on the stage starting the play. Besides questioning the 'commoners' in accordance with Shakespeare's text, they walk among the audience and, in a more or less comical way, they introduce their spectators to the play, providing another layer of the metatheatricity of the play. They say that they are the first victims of the civil war and they point out that they are about to show how it came to that civil war. Here one can see that the actors are not strictly holding onto Shakespeare's text. At times they insert some comical inflections that still do not modify Shakespeare's text

significantly. At other times they seem to paraphrase Shakespeare's script and in that way repeat his lines, but their modifications are not altering significantly the meanings of the script e.g. in the same scene when they say that they are "lucky to be remembered at least, unlike thousands and thousands of civilians, women and children" (Cavalli 2013b, 04:20).

They open the stage curtain and we see the actors sitting around a long table composed of four smaller tables put together. 'Flavius', who also plays the 'assistant director' states that initially he wanted to play 'Julius Caesar', but he wasn't allowed to, and there's a sense that everybody wanted to be Caesar (Cavalli 2013b, 04:50). This is reinforced later by Cavalli in our interview, who explained that Cosimo Rega, for instance, wanted to play Caesar because of his cultural prestige, and that he had to explain to him that Caesar had very few lines in the play. The fact that 'Caesar' had only few lines helped convince Rega otherwise (Cavalli 2019). 'Flavius' then says that he then wanted to play 'Brutus' or 'Cassius' but, when he remembered that they are now in hell, he changed his mind. This points out to Dante's condemnation of the conspiracy and his placement of Brutus and Cassius alongside Judas Iscariot in the ninth circle of hell and this is a kind of a pseudo-subliminal suggestion of the performance's evaluation of the conspirators (Dante *Inf.* 34.61-67). 'Flavius'/Giannone recounts how he wasn't able to get other actors let him play any roles and Cavalli

supposedly offered him the role of the 'assistant director', "the most important in the hierarchy after the director". So today "it's he who commands" (Cavalli 2019, 5:30). Here we can see how the hierarchy is important just like in the film and in the prison life in general. As we have seen in the previous chapters, even in the world of the historical reenactment hierarchy is important in a very similar way.

He then introduces the scene and the actors sitting around the table: 'Cassius', 'Brutus', 'Cinna', 'Trebonius', 'Metellus', 'Decius', 'Casca', 'Mark Antony' and 'Calpurnia' (Image 20). There are also two groups of actors standing behind the table in the background on the left and right. He let the audience know that 'Caesar' was released from prison. So they make Cavalli play Caesar. It is important to note that Cavalli has a degree in acting and he used to work as an actor in the past. Here he pretends he doesn't want to do it, although it was his decision obviously, and they bring him in their hands on the stage. He sits in the middle, puts on his reading glasses, flips over the script, and gives sign to start the scene. Indirectly this points to the nature of *Caesar Must Die*, to the fact that there are a lot of moments in the film that look spontaneous and documentary like this one, but like in the film, this performance is based on a script and Cavalli's directorial choices.

Image 20. The beginning of the play. *Film still*.



They play I.II. 'Calpurnia' whispers something to 'Caesar', he complains on the noise, suggesting that he cannot hear well. During the performance he complains several times about his hearing, more than in the play itself. This suggests that their 'Caesar' is an older man, not at his social, political and military zenith anymore. In a way this enables the audience even to sympathize with 'Caesar' who perhaps cannot defend himself from the conspirators. 'Caesar' goes to 'Mark Antony' and he instructs him to win the Lupercal race and make sure to touch 'Calpurnia' because she believes that may cure her infertility. In 'Caesar's words it's she who "has got it in her head", not him. Here we can see how they manipulate Shakespeare's lines. In the play it is not Calpurnia that suggests this, but it is Caesar himself. He instructs Antony to do it because in that way "maybe she'll be a 'bit quieter for a couple of days of weeks". However non-chauvinist his credentials may be,

this is a disturbing choice of words, that suggests an underlying patriarchal, heteronormative, chauvinist system. This is the only time in the performance that actors speak of women in that way, but the fact that all the scenes with Portia are cut off from the performance does not help. Therefore, this remains a challenging issue and it is difficult to argue without doubt both for or against this interpretation of the performance.

Furthermore, when 'Spurinna' starts yelling from the audience, all the actors suddenly get up from the table as if it were a threat. A few of them run and constrain him, and they get him to the stage. 'Caesar' mocks him. He doesn't say "He is a dreamer; let us leave him: pass", but "I believe in your foreboding so much that I get the tremors (*Tanto credo nel tuo presaggio che mi vengono i tremori*)" and he shakes his legs in a comical way. Everybody laughs (Cavalli 2013b, 9:20). At this point they change the sequence of the events from the play. Contrary to the play, first 'Caesar' complains to 'Antony' about 'Cassius', and then we see the dialogue between 'Cassius' and Brutus'. When 'Caesar' complains that 'Cassius' is too thin, 'Antony' says he'll "invite him to lunch more often". At the same time 'Cassius' and Brutus' are standing closely one in front of the other in the dark on the other side of the stage looking each other in the eyes. The scene is accompanied by subtle, tense music in the background. "I know you didn't understand anything I said, but leave the conclusions to me" (*Lo so che non hai capito niente di quello che ho detto,*

ma le conclusioni lascia le a me), says 'Caesar' to 'Antony'. Here we see an arrogant 'Caesar' saying non-Shakespearean lines (Cavalli 2013b 11:10). For the most part of the performance he is not arrogant like this, confident at times yes, but not arrogant. 'Antony' tries to say something to 'Caesar' and, according to Shakespeare's script, he tells him to switch to the other ear because he doesn't hear well. The light goes off, a sudden strike of the low key piano notes marks the end of this part of the scene.

The light goes on and 'the assistant director' introduces the part of the scene with 'Cassius' and Brutus'. 'Cassius' is not played by Cosimo Rega, like in *Caesar Must Die* or in *La libertà repubblicana*, but by Giacomo Silvano. 'Cassius' shouts a little bit too much in the scene. He seems repulsed by 'Caesar'. An ambiental music accompanies the scene. It neutral, in the way it let's voices of the actors dominate the scene. In accordance with Shakespeare's play, 'Casca' comes to the stage. Like in *Caesar Must Die*, he is played by Vittorio Parrella. He gesticulates a little bit too much with his hands. While speaking to 'Casca' and 'Brutus' he seems somewhat stiff, and he looks in the direction of the audience somewhat unnaturally. When commenting on Caesar's fainting at the Lupercal feast, he makes a dance-like move that evokes his dance movements from *Caesar Must Die* (Cavalli 2013b, 17:50). When 'Brutus' exits, 'Casca' and 'Cassius' continue, and without interruptions they start the next scene, I.III. The two of them are commenting the supernatural events in Rome, not 'Casca' and 'Cicero' like in

the play. A part of the scene from the source text is omitted (Cavalli 2013b, 22:00). Like in the play, 'Cinna' joins them towards the end of the scene. What's more interesting than cutting the scene is the translation of 'Cassius's' evaluation of the situation. He says that "if 'Brutus' will not join them, they'll be persecuted like terrorists, but under his banner, on the other hand, they're patriots". He uses actually that word – *terroristi* which is another subtle reminder of Cavalli's evaluation of the conspiracy (Cavalli 2013b, 25:30). 'Cassius' reassures 'Casca' that "'Brutus' will be there", and the light goes off, marking the end of I.III.

Still in the dark, 'the assistant director' let's the audience know that "now we are at Brutus's house, who reads the post from the alternative postage service" (Image 21).

Image 21. 'Brutus' reading the messages conceived by 'Casca'. *Film still*.



Tense, dynamic music in the background suggests secretive, illegal movements of 'Cassius's' conspirators who put the messages on the table while 'Brutus' sleeps. The music stops when he wakes up. He is scared because he notices somebody was there while he was sleeping. He reads the messages feverishly, gets up and performs the monologue that shows his inner struggle. During the monologue the music resumes. His monologue seems less convincing than Striano's in *Caesar Must Die*. The reason for that may well lie in the lack of a personal story that the film builds on. Also the acting style is much more static, sometimes stiff and somewhat sterile and unexciting. What is more, the flat angle long-to-medium shots of the DVD version of the theatrical staging do not help convey his emotions and importance of the moment. Also the sound quality of the DVD version is limited as it rests upon small wireless microphones attached to the actors' belts, and then

recorded by a distant camera. These technical limitations are very similar in the case of the reenactment as well. The reenactors carry similar microphones and their performances are usually live streamed and recorded by relatively far-off fixed cameras that limit the viewing experience. The richness of that experience is then better conveyed by the photographs done by professional photographers and with expensive equipment who attend the reenactments.

When he finishes the inner-struggle monologue, 'Brutus' welcomes his fellow conspirators to the stage. We can see that unlike in Shakespeare's play, in this performance 'Lucius' is completely left out of the scene. 'Cassius' takes 'Brutus' away from the center of the stage to speak to him in private, and 'the conspirators' talk about where the sun rises (Cavalli 2013b, 29:50). Like in *Caesar Must Die*, in this context this is a meta-theatrical scene, because sun and the atmospheric changes are usually unavailable to prisoners in the high-security wing, except during their allocated time in the prison court yard. When 'Brutus' and 'Cassius' come back and while 'Brutus' shakes their hands and explains the supposed intent of their conspiracy, the panel in the large panel in the background of the stage gets illuminated in bright red (Image 22). Also ambiental epic music accompanies the scene. This music, that is usually used in Hollywood and video game industry to enhance the importance of a part of the narrative or an event, seems to suggest the purity of the conspiracy and the idealism of

the conspirators. Again, Striano's performance in *Caesar Must Die* seems more powerful, again because of the personal aspect of the narrative, the differences in the acting style, and the camera work.

Image 22. "If I could only remove the spirit of the tyrant..." *Film still.*



The conspirators agree on the proceedings and the light goes off. The part of the scene with Portia and Brutus is not performed, that points to the reduction of the female roles in the play. Also the last part of the scene, with Brutus, Lucius and Ligarius is omitted.

What follows is the non-Shakespearean scene between 'Cicero' and 'Caesar' (Image 23), introduced again by 'the assistant director'. While they play the scene, the lighting is reduced, there is lighting on the giant panel in the back.

Black suits of the actors enhance the *chiaro scuro* effect. Only a small end of the long table where 'Caesar' and 'Cicero' are sitting is visible. In this scene the limitations of the camera are noteworthy. In comparison to the film *La libertà repubblicana* where the interplay of close-ups from different angles enhances the effect of intimacy of 'Caesar's' performance and in that way sheds light on the director's interpretation of the behavior and motivations of the historical Caesar, here limited long-to-medium shots are unable to convey fully 'Caesar's' emotions. The medium shots succeed in showing distress and the fatigue in 'Caesar's' facial expressions and in his somewhat slow movements. When talking about the battle scene he gets up, while in *La libertà repubblicana* 'Caesar' on the other hand remains seated throughout this scene.

Another important dichotomy within this scene in itself is 'Caesar's' moving around the table and across the stage in contrast to 'Cicero's' immovability. Although he is going to get killed on the following moment, when 'Caesar' is on stage, he seems to dominate it with his presence. In *Caesar Must Die*, 'Caesar' also dominates the screen, but there's a difference in the way he does it. There Arcuri's corpulence in combination with the camera work from different angles (mostly lower, but also higher) enables him to possess the screen. In comparison to Arcuri, Cavalli's body on stage seems weaker in his black suit. His presence is characterized by his resolute tone and his trained, academic diction, usually without any dialectal or local accent. His

facial expressions and the movement contrast 'Cicero's seated and static figure. 'Caesar' is angry and resigned because of the ingratitude of the Romans for everything he had done for them. He looks in the direction of the crowd, but like Arcuri in the assassination scene in *Caesar Must Die*, he seems to be looking beyond them, in the horizon, in his own past and future. His trained academic pronunciation in this scene is at times broken off by dialectal or slang inflections, when he tells that the Romans may "go to hell" if they don't like him, if he is not good enough for them. The dialect and local slang emphasize 'Caesar's emotional state. He is frustrated that nobody has the dignity to "tell it to his face". This is the culminating moment of the scene. 'Cicero' finally gets up, 'Caesar' and he openly fight and threat to each other. They seem like old friends and enemies at the same time, whose best days have passed, still pushing each other to the limit, as if they were sensing the perils that await both of them. This is suggested by the words Cavalli puts in their mouth. 'Cicero' courageously states that he himself doesn't like 'Caesar'. Here Cavalli's acting makes 'Caesar' look like a weak old man who is not the powerful military commander he once was. He is not even able to stop 'Cicero's' outburst. He is constrained to listen to him, and he tries to oppose him by replying that "if anything happens, he'll be the first on the list" (to die, of course). 'Cicero' astutely replies back without a sense of a doubt that "'Caesar' will be the first, and he may come in second, like always". There is a redundant moment of a pause.

'Cicero' turns his back and walks away from 'Caesar', who looks defeated. He lowers his head and helplessly leans on the table. With a gloomy face he falls into a chair, pauses for a few moments, and then finishes the scene full of doubts and with a presentiment of what will happen in the next scene. The limitations of the camera are here visible again, as a close-up in this particularly tense moment that may be Cavalli's greatest contribution to a psychological interpretation of the historical 'Caesar' is missing.

Image 23. The non-Shakespearean scene with 'Caesar' and 'Cicero'. *Film still.*



The end of the scene is not completely discernible because 'Calpurnia' enters the stage and II.II. starts (Cavalli 2013b, 41:50). They omit Shakespeare's beginning of the scene where Caesar sends a servant to order the priests to present a sacrifice, although shortly after the beginning of this part

of the performance a 'servant' does come to the stage and reports the results. 'Calpurnia' is also dressed in black and wears an elegant blouse and pants. In contrast to her, Cavalli looks somewhat under-dressed. Even if he is wearing a suit, in this *chiaro scuro* it looks like a very cheap and shabby one. His worn t-shirt underneath enhances this impression. In contrast, 'Decius', who will soon come to the stage, looks more formal and dignified in his somewhat flashy shirt and pants. Even 'Cicero' in his suit in the previous scene looked better than 'Caesar'. Like in most other scenes, 'Caesar' here holds on tightly to the script and he carries it in his hand throughout the scene, as if he was scared to forget the lines. This contrasts the self-aggrandizing lines he pronounces. The aforementioned servant comes to the stage to report the results from the augurers. He wears simple blue jeans and a slim-fit t-shirt. His semi-formal bodyguard-like body language evokes Mafia references from *Caesar Must Die* (Calbi 2014, 242), and 'Caesar's' order to "go tighten up the security guard" may make spectators think of the organized crime. This is one of the very few instances in the performance where a notion of the prisoners' previous lives may be hinted. It is peculiar that this staging evokes *Caesar Must Die* in a scene that is not shown in the film itself. But more than the Tavianis' film, this small episode remembers similar cliches from Hollywood's action films.

Even though he's obviously scared because of the news he just receives, Cavalli swiftly and effectively turns

Shakespeare's phrase and reinterprets the results to 'Calpurnia' contrary to her fears. In this small part of the scene one can note the greatness of Cavalli's acting. He's terrified, he runs violently towards her. This aggression seems to be caused by his defense mechanism, not by his irritation by 'Calpurnia's' fears. They shout at each other. He takes it out on her. They sit at the table, he lowers his head, and in a second, he is not violent anymore, but compassionate. He accepts her complaints. The way in which he takes and caresses her hand, and the fact that he doesn't look her in her face but in another direction suggest that he subjects to her will. To an extent this compromises the masculine and Caesarean stereotype the Tavianis' film seems to provide. Shortly after 'Decius' comes to the stage, 'Caesar' makes 'Calpurnia' go away so he could talk to him in private (Cavalli 2013b, 46:20). Even she is present in the performance, she is marginalized, because she is a woman and they need to talk about men's stuff. This shows how the play still reinforces the patriarchal system, however differently than *Caesar Must Die* that simply erases all female roles.

Later in the scene, when 'Caesar' and conspirators leave the stage to go to the Senate meeting, the light goes off. This usage of the lights is one of the few technical instruments that helps Cavalli emphasize certain moments and aspects of the play. Again, it is used as the only way to mark the end of one scene and a beginning of another. II.III. starts and a spotlight shows 'Artemidorus' sitting among the

audience and reading the warning he will soon give to Caesar. At the same time we can hear the conspirators in the dark mention the daggers and in that way announce the following scene. This vocal intervention is one of the strategies that are not inherent to the play text itself. The II.IV. with Portia and Lucius is skipped and Cavalli goes immediately to act III. and 'Artemidorus' just continues his performance without a break. Tense music accompanies the scene. The light goes on and we see conspirators on the stage. A small platform in the background is the only prop on the stage. A red light again illuminates the giant pannel in the background. 'Artemidorus' runs around the stage to get to 'Caesar'. 'Conspirators' block him. There are more than twenty actors and extras on stage. 'Trebonius' takes 'Antony' off stage. The extras leave as well and only the conspirators stay. 'Metellus Cimber', played by Vincenzo Gallo ('Lucius' in *Caesar Must Die*) is already kneeling when 'Caesar' turns around to him. Strangely, even this scene Cavalli is sticking to carrying the script in his hand. Also, like in *Caesar Must Die*, we can see daggers around the conspirators' belts, and 'Caesar' isn't frightened by this (Image 24).

Image 24. 'Metellus Cimber' pleading for his brother. *Film still.*



In accordance to Shakespeare's script, 'Caesar' reprimands 'Cimber' for bothering him with the plea. Here the language comes to the forefront again. For kneeling, 'Caesar' says *genuflessioni*, and this is a word originating from Mediaeval Latin. It is not a common word in Italian language today and is certainly not used by 'Caesar' in the Tavianis' film. This points how Cavalli's language is very academic and learned. It is no wonder that he speaks with no accent and there are almost none dialectal or slang inflections in his performance. 'Genuflecting' is an archaic word, and as Cambridge English dictionary shows, it refers to the act of "bending one or both knees as a sign of respect to God, especially when entering or leaving a Catholic church" (2019). This is definitely not a word prisoners are

likely to use and it shows the dichotomy between great 'Caesar's language and the language of the 'conspirators'.

Also the space, the set design and the choreography of this assassination scene differ from that in the Tavianis' film. Here we have the bare stage with only the aforementioned multi-cube prop in the background. The bright-red-lit giant panel in the background symbolizes the nature and the importance of the scene and it contrasts black clothing of the conspirators. They are all well placed around 'Caesar' and they have much more free space than in the narrow and squalid court yard of the film. The only confusing aspect of the scene is 'Trebonius's' hand on 'Metellus's' back while he pleads for his brother, that has no sense. 'Caesar' is very resolute and arrogant and he shouts at seemingly humble 'Metellus'. Other conspirators stare without saying a word. Unobtrusive musical background leaves 'Caesar's' words to dominate the scene. 'Metellus' breaks off Shakespeare's script by asking 'Brutus', 'Cassius' and other conspirators to help him convince 'Caesar'. They all kneel and beg using non-Shakespearean lines. They talk about 'Metellus's' ruined family. 'Caesar' states that "had he ever asked for favors to get some benefits, maybe he could accept their lamenting", another non-Shakespearean explanation. Here 'Caesar' is rhetorical and seems to speak only to himself. Like in *Caesar Must Die*, he is not looking at the conspirators, but in the horizon (Imagey 25 and 26).

Image 25. 'Caesar' looking into horizon moments before getting killed. *Film still.*



Technical limitations again prohibit conveying the full dimension of the scene as a flat angle medium shot of Caesar is the biggest insight a cinematic spectator can get into the scene. The 'conspirators' immovability make his monologue seem to long and unnatural.

Image 26. 'Caesar' looking into horizon moments before getting killed. *Film still.*



When 'Caesar' condemns 'Metellus' brother once again, the conspirators get up and approach 'Caesar'. He looks around suspiciously and shouts at them aggressively. He pronounces a sentence that is not found in Shakespeare's play: "What do you want, stay away!" and they close the circle around him. Only then he shouts Shakespeare's words: "wilt thou lift up Olympus?" The light gets dim. 'Casca' climbs on the cube in the background. When he attacks he doesn't say "Speak, hands for me!". Instead he says "If you really don't want to listen, listen to this!" obviously referring to 'Caesar' not wanting to listen to their plea. The light goes off. Only the red light in the background stays on and we see conspirators' dark shadows stabbing 'Caesar' at once (Image 27).

Image 27. Conspirators stabbing Caesar. *Film still.*



This is very similar to Rob Melrose's representation of the killing of his Obama-like Caesar! He also turns off the light and we see red-lit shadows of the conspirators stabbing 'Caesar' in slow motion. Music in the background is expectedly tense. We only see a medium close-up of the stabbing. 'Caesar' screams from pain and falls. 'Brutus' lowers him to the floor. 'Brutus' takes the dagger out of his belt. He stops for a few moments, much more than in the film. 'Caesar' says: "Anche tu, Bruto", 'Brutus' stabs him (Image 28), and after few moments 'Caesar' barely utters "figlio mio". Like in the film, we have this line said in standard Italian. This also associates the usage of the standard Italian in this adaptation with the use of Latin by Shakespeare. It points out the cultural prestige of 'Caesar' who, therefore, speaks not in Latin or in dialect like the

conspirators, but in academic Italian without dialectal or local inflections.

Image 28. Brutus stabbing Caesar. *Film still.*



We can hear 'Brutus' breathing heavily. He sighs over Caesar's dead body quite a few seconds and during that time other conspirators stand still in a line behind them. The script finally falls from 'Caesar's' hand. 'Casca' is still standing on the cubicle. 'Brutus' slowly gets up and silently starts saying "libertà". He raises his arms up, other conspirators do the same with daggers in their hands and they all start repeating together loudly "libertà" (Image 29).

Image 29. "Liberty! Liberty!"



Suddenly they stop, they lower their arms and 'Brutus' says that "the ambition has paid its debt". 'Cassius' asks them to "immerse and wash their hands in his blood". They kneel and do it. We're still seeing only this play of black silhouettes on a red light in the background. The light goes off and the audience claps. After a few moments the light goes back on, there's no red light in the background, 'Cassius' on the left starts the metatheatrical phrase "How many ages hence shall this our lofty scene be acted over in states unborn and accents yet unknown!" and 'Brutus' on the right finishes with his lines. Like in the film he doesn't refer to Pompey's statue but to the prison. The fact that Cavalli decides to interrupt the play of black shadows in the red light and literally turn the lights on emphasize the metatheatricality of 'Caesar's' assassination.

In the play, 'Antony's servant is supposed to come to the stage now, but they skip this part and it is 'Mark Antony' that immediately comes accompanied by sad music. 'The servant' is completely cut off from this scene. 'Antony's performance is reserved, silent, not too sad, more realistic than energetic performance of 'Antony' in the Tavianis' film (Image 30). 'Brutus' and 'Cassius' make peace with him. After 'conspirators's objections, 'Brutus' gives him the permission to eulogize 'Caesar' at the forum. Conspirators' objections are again an example of the lines that do not exist in the play but more or less paraphrase and repeat Shakespeare's lines. 'Brutus' shakes his hand, and the conspirators leave 'Antony' with 'Caesar's' body and he makes his oath of vengeance.

Image 30. Antony cursing the conspirators over Caesar's dead body. *Film still.*



Again the technological limitations fail to convey Antony's feelings to the fullest. This flat angle medium-long shot contrasts in that respect well the low-angle close-up of the same moment from *Caesar Must Die*. 'Antony' is aggressive and he is accompanied by unobtrusive but tense music. After he finishes, the light goes off and the audience claps again.

The "narrator" comes back, says that the battle scene follows but that they won't perform it so now they will show the fight between 'Brutus' and 'Cassius'. We are seeing IV.III. and we can see how much of the play is omitted: III.III. with Cinna the poet, IV.I. the meeting between Antony, Octavius and Lepidus, IV.II. when Cassius comes to Brutus' tent, the whole act V. On the other hand, this is a long scene not performed in *Caesar Must Die*. However, parts of the scene with the drunk poet, Lucilius, Tititinius, Lucius, Messala, Varro and Claudius are omitted too. Even 'Brutus's encounter with 'Caesar's ghost' is not performed.

'Brutus' and 'Cassius' fight, we learn that 'Portia' killed herself. 'Brutus' even cries, although he looks away from the stage and the camera so we don't see it. 'Cassius' is full of compassion for his friend. They hug each other as friends and the light goes off. We hear disorder (Cavalli 2013b, 1:09:40). This is emphasized by a spotlight circulating randomly through the theater and the audience. The voices of the actors are indiscernible. They are cheering 'Brutus'. A ray of light illuminates him standing on the

stage. Behind him, in the background we see a black shadow of 'Caesar' sitting on the cubicle under which he was killed. There is again the red light illuminating the giant panel in the background. We are seeing III.II. Tense and then ambiental music in the background accompanies 'Brutus' oration (Image 31). Again, Antonio Frasca is here much more static and composed than in the film. 'Common people' acclaim him. Unlike in *Caesar Must Die*, here we don't see them. Again, 'Antony's speech is different than Brutus's in the film. It is more standard language than dialect and this contrasts the fact that Frasca used a lot of dialect in his own oration in the film. That dialect evoked Mafia references (Calbi 2014, 242), and the lack of it saves this performance of analogies of that kind.

Image 31. Brutus delivering his speech. Caesar's shadow in the background. *Film still*.



While Antony delivers his oration, he almost doesn't move at all (Image 32). His body is static, stiff, except his arms. Even his oration is much more in standard Italian than in the film and it is also accompanied by soft, slightly sad ambiental music in the background. The dynamics of his voice is somewhat elaborate. It ranges from loud shouting that doesn't sound too clear in the video, to almost silent emphases. He shouts a little bit too much. He is very angry. He condemns conspirators and among them he condemns Brutus the most, he calls him "il più grande infame", and this is not a Shakespearean line. We see that Dante's condemnation of the conspirators appears in this adaptation. 'Antony' names all the conspirators, he calls them "infamous assassins" and that also suggests that he alters a little bit Shakespeare's text. He shouts so much until he reads 'Caesar's will with a calm, silent voice. He shouts to emphasize that 'Caesar' left everything he had to the people of Rome. He lowers his voice again and says: "Amici questo è il vero Giulio Cesare" and starts shouting again saying: "Quando mai verrà un altro come lui!!!" The people shout: "Viva Cesare, viva Cesare", the light goes off, the people clap and the performance ends.

Image 32. Antony's static oration. *Film still.*



7.6. A short film *La Libertà Repubblicana*

Cavalli also produced another film based on his theatrical staging of *Julius Caesar*, entitled *La Libertà Repubblicana - Epilogo – Tirannicidio* as a part of his project on “educational pathways between prison and school” (Cavalli 2013b; La Ribalta n.d.). This video also shows the importance of the non-Shakespearean scene with Cicero and Caesar as it takes up almost a third of the whole duration of the video. In this 17-minute recording too, meta-cinematic “assistant director” is employed. Here he explains the scenes of the play and like a narrator from historical films and in the historical reenactment he interprets the historical event for the spectators. His performance is characterized by somewhat comical remarks, that contrast the gravity of the film.

Curiously, similarly to the Taviani's film, this video includes not only the footage of the performance on the theater stage, but also the shots in other prison spaces. In fact, the film starts with the scene of 'Brutus's (Antonio Frasca) interior monologue from II.I., a monologue in which he repeats that Caesar "must die" (Cavalli 2013b). He performs it in some kind of an open space within the prison complex and his thoughts are accompanied by tense musical background, characterized by a kind of woodwind instrument and the sound of thunder. Then we see the 'assistant director' who like in historical films, explains the story behind the film: "The situation is like this: Caesar wants to make himself a tyrant of Rome". We see 'the conspirators' sitting at a big table full of papers on the theater stage and we witness I.I., 'Cassius' (Cosimo Rega, like in *Caesar Must Die*) tries to convince 'Brutus' to participate in the conspiracy. Their conversation is accompanied by suspensful music in the background. There is another characteristic of Roman historical films here, the captions on screen that help spectators recognize the historical personages played by the actors (Image 33).

Image 33. Brutus talking to Cassius in I.I. *Film still.*



After this we again see the 'assistant director' that announces next rehearsal scene: 'Cassius's and 'Casca's consultations from I.III. The 'director' is always comical insofar as he has problems remembering and repeating the script, so his part is always presented in several shots, until he makes it. The scene takes place again at the long table on the stage of the prison theater. 'Cassius' sits next to 'Casca' (played by Vittorio Parella like in *Caesar Must Die*). He wants to know what's going on in the city, and 'Casca' speaks of a pregnant atmosphere full of supernatural omens. Their conversation too is accompanied by suspenseful music and sounds of thunder. It is peculiar that they are very calm when talking about this which contrasts conventional adaptations of *JC* where they are usually very energetic, shouting, and moving on the stage as much as possible. However, with their facial

expressions, composed torso movements and somewhat muffled but decisive tone of their voice they convey the seriousness of the situation.

The screen turns black and we see again the 'assistant director', who announces the rehearsal of the conspiracy scene from II.I. Again, we see Brutus' interior struggle and his monologue, however a longer version than in the beginning of the film. Once more, Frasca's 'Brutus' is much more composed and static than Striano from *Caesar Must Die*. The screen turns black for a second and we're back around the table at the theater stage, among the conspirators. Captions on screen help spectators recognize the actors playing *Decio Bruto Albino*, *Metello Cimbri*, *Lucio Cornelio Cinna*. Again, the performance is very composed, they're all calmly sitting around the table, in a way that evokes Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, and the main instrument of acting in this scene is again their voice. At first it is calm, then a little bit louder, but always decisive. It reveals the seriousness of the situation and the determination of the conspirators. Very different from Striano's energetic moving around the set and his loud and visceral shouting, his tense face with his almost bulging eyes. Even the camera work reflects this style of acting. The camera is almost always in the level of the actors faces, and the zoom from medium-long shots to close-ups in this scene is slow, fluent and non-aggressive.

Then the aforementioned scene with 'Cicero' and 'Caesar' takes place (Image 16), followed by a black screen with

white-red captions that state that “Caesar was murdered with 23 stabs on the next day, 15 March 44 B.C.” Curiously, the assassination scene is not represented in the film, and the 'assistant director' announces a rehearsal of Mark Antony's speech over Caesar's dead body. In less than a minute, we see a close-up of 'Antony's eyeline, moving fast between different extreme- and medium-close-ups (Image 34). He's alone on the stage, and the lights are fairly dimmed. He doesn't move his body. Only his mouth and his eyes convey his feelings. Even though his speech is followed by background music that reminds of Coppola's *Godfather*, the scene doesn't look like a reference to prisoners' lives and Italian organized crime.

Image 34. Mark Antony's oration. *Film still.*



The last 30 or so seconds of the film show black screen with white-red captions that summarize the aftermath of the assassination: the battle at the Philippi, the death of the

conspirators, but also the events outside of the range of Shakespeare's play, emphasizing thus Cavalli's staging as not only an adaptation of Shakespeare, but also as an interpretation of the historical event.

7.7. Audience Reception

After the success of the Tavianis' film in Berlin, seeing Cavalli's staging of Shakespeare's play *in situ*, in the prison theater itself, was definitely in high demand. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, those who succeeded in getting the tickets, highly praised the film (Garcea 2012; Grasso 2012; Di Bagno 2013; Di Brigida 2013; Brucoli 2013). However, the theater at the Rebibbia prison is small, it has only 350 seats and getting the tickets at such a high-security and high-restrictions venue is very difficult. Therefore, only a limited number of people was lucky enough to be able to see the performance. Also, as I pointed out in the "audience reception" part of the previous chapter, live streaming any events from the prison demands an extraordinary permission from the Minister of Justice herself, so it is understandable that this prison event was not present on social media as the two previous case studies. However, some clips from the prison-theater performances were streamed as part of TV newscast on the La7 network, and were uploaded on YouTube by the said TV station, by another YouTube news channel, and by the producer of the event, Cavalli's LaRibalta organization (TG La7 2013; youcomvideo 2013; LaRibalta 2014). These clips actually were only sources for the performances the public could

see, apart from attending the performances at Rebibbia. The video by La7 was viewed by 157 YouTube users and liked by 2 of these (TG La7 2013). The video by LaRibalta was viewed by 843 users and was also liked by 2 of these (LaRibalta 2014). The video with most visualizations was the one from the independent YouTube information channel, youcomvideo, that was visualized by 1,419 users. It was liked by 6 people and disliked by 2 of them (youcomvideo 2013). None of these videos received any comments. This data implies that even if social networks are important for prisoners, getting content from within the prison online is very difficult and is preceded by different legal challenges. Just like the beginning of the Tavianis' film has shown, upon entering the prison for a theater performance, visitors leave their belongings with the prison police at the very entrance to the building. Prison is and remains a closed community, and a system that cannot benefit from social networks more than it can. Just like the Tavianis' film as a commercial product cannot be live streamed free of charge on social media, so a theatrical performance within the prison obviously cannot be freely distributed for safety and legal reasons. On the other hand, social media, and more particularly, Facebook, do play an important role in the context of prison theater and life in prison. The protagonists of the Tavianis' film have not used their Facebook accounts only for promoting themselves professionally. Quite the contrary, both 'Brutus' (Salvatore Striano) and 'Cassius' (Cosimo Rega) have been continuously and tirelessly using their Facebook profiles to

continue promote the messages of both the Tavianis' film and Cavalli's work, to indicate urgent problems of life within Italian prisons and to advocate for the rights of prisoners, something both the film and the prison staging subtly problematize. Cavalli himself, who basically devoted his whole (professional) life and career to working with and for prisoners, problematizing their situation and promoting improvement of the life in prison and prisoners' rehabilitation has, also been a protagonist of this kind of presence on Facebook. In that sense their activities embody the original functions of Shakespeare's play, to problematize issues of his own time, in his (and, respectively, their) own socio-political context. All of them, Rega, Striano and Cavalli, have been followed by thousands of people on Facebook, and have been all interacting daily with their audiences, particularly on the aforementioned issues (Rega n.d., Striano n.d.a, Cavalli n.d.). Striano even has a Fan Club page on Facebook followed by more than 3,800 users. Videos he posts are visualized by thousands of people too (Striano n.d.b). Were it not for Facebook that empowered them, they actually would not have a platform to do so.

8. Conclusions

Research Question 1 (RQ1), that deals with the characteristics of the productions of the Ides of March analyzed in this thesis, tends to spill itself over other research questions. When addressing the first case study, it is important to mention that even if they strive to authenticity and historical accuracy, the reenactors fail to disclose what historical sources they have used for their non-Shakespearean scenes, even if these scenes may be viewed as fairly coherent syntheses of a large part of the historical sources' take on the historical event. Since the analysis has pointed out that even the historical sources have been compromised and can be taken as trustworthy only up to a relatively small measure (Lintott 2009, 72; Weinstock 1971, 347), this is something that reenactors might have used to show transparency and the reenactment as their own critical reading of the historical event. However, missing this opportunity and instead rushing from 49BC from the first scene to 44BC in the second scene with only a short mentioning of the time in-between in the para-text, emphasizes their choices as a celebration of Julius Caesar. Throughout the whole reenactment, and contrary to both Shakespeare and other ancient sources referred to in this thesis, mainly Cicero, the reenactors' choice not to provide a point of view of the conspirators again strengthens their performance as a celebration of Caesar. In that sense one should understand the choice not to perform parts of Shakespeare's play that

show the conspirators' perspective, something that does happen more in Cavalli's staging and significantly more in the Tavianis' film. The scenes where Caesar is portrayed as a darker figure or where the assassination may seem justified are simply not performed. Also, the choice of excluding metatheatrical aspects from Shakespeare's play, contrary to the Tavianis' film and Cavalli's staging, emphasizes the function of reenactment as commemoration and not a theatrical play. Their usage of Ugo Foscolo's poem analysed in the thesis also suggests this. It is also suggested by the last-minute choice of not including Giulio Valentini's performance of his satirical cabaret *Come Giulio Cesare* that ridiculizes Julius Caesar. However, the reenactors' desired historical accuracy and authenticity are compromised also by Calpurnia's monologue, a completely fictional script, in which she cries for Caesar and talks how she didn't mind too much that he cheated on her. The script and performance are both of a very poor theatrical quality, and this monologue raises other issues too, those of gender roles and quality of the performance.

The analyses have shown that the performance of the prisoners in both the film and Cavalli's staging was of greater artistic and acting qualities from the reenactors. This is not strange since the majority of the prisoners actors finished an acting school while in prison, while only some of the reenactors have been attending a kind of an amateur acting workshop within their organization. Even if the prisoners use their local dialects both in the Cavalli's staging and the Tavianis' film, their performance is on a

higher artistic and literary level than that of the reenactors, who perform in standard Italian. On that note, the detailed comparative analyses of their script together with eight different Italian translations of the play, those most recent, popular and canonical has shown that they are using very simple, non-literary language, and thus offer much less in that respect than the prisoners. Not only is the choice of translation telling but also mistakes that reenactors commit while performing, that have been thoroughly enumerated and analysed. It is understandable that the Tavianis' film due to the nature of the medium can manipulate more this kind of risk, but the live recording of Cavalli's staging stresses the level of their performance.

The second issue raised by the above-mentioned Calpurnia's monologue is the treatment of gender in the three case studies, both of masculinity and femininity. Reenactors' male characters are histrionic because of the lower acting skills of the performers. This histrionicism is manifested through aggressive movements on the stage, excessive shouting and wild hand gesticulations. These are big, angry men who possess entire stage. Here we are talking mostly about the senators because Caesar doesn't get the chance to show his characters as he is killed as soon as he enters the stage. This contrasts the source text that develops a complex characterization of Caesar in detail. In the play, when Caesar is on stage, he dominates the stage. In reenactment he doesn't, so he is the victim of the conspirators in this way too. Except Calpurnia, women have marginal roles in the reenactment and they basically

serve like 'extras' in film industry. They dress up and position themselves outside of the stage. They pretend they talk among each other but the audience cannot hear them. They try to beg something from the senators and Caesar as they pass along their sides, but the men do not pay attention to them. This contrasts Shakespeare's play where women count or at least try to fight for their voice, both Calpurnia who begs her husband not to go to the Senate meeting and Portia who proves to her husband that she is smart, courageous and worthy of being included in his affairs. In the reenactment, women get a voice only after almost fifteen years after the beginning of this tradition and the voice they get is of Calpurnia who implies it's OK her husband cheated her because Cleopatra is pretty and fascinating. All of this offers a rather disturbing portrayal of women in the reenactment and justifying it would be a daunting challenge.

The Tavianis too are not interested in either casting actresses (from prison or from the outside) or having male prisoners play female roles, even if both strategies have been employed by Fabio Cavalli in his previous projects and were acclaimed. Explanations they give are vague and unconvincing and the film is a story about men's world, that alludes to the prisoners' previous lives and past sins, with the references very explicit at times. "This being an all-male prison, the play's two female roles are cut, but the production's machismo vibe comes from far more than that decision. This is a film about men and manliness, about

masculine virtue and honour and a (very Italian) impulse to both male violence and male sentimentality. Parts of it feel like a low budget chapter of the *Godfather* franchise, Brutus and co., less civic minded aristocrats than local mafiosi" (Hartley 2016b, 78). One could be inclined to conclude that the film actually takes advantage of the prisoners had they not agreed on this portrayal of themselves and the characters from the play. Therefore, the masculinity presented in the film is based entirely on the masculine stereotypes of Italian criminals belonging to organized crime organizations such as Mafia, 'Ndrangheta and Camorra. However, this violent masculinity is not unrestrained because the prison as a place where violence is a taboo. Contrary to these two cases, only in Cavalli's staging female characters from the play are not excluded from the performances. On several occasions Cavalli employs different external actresses who play Calpurnia and Portia. It is noteworthy again that the Tavianis intentionally didn't hire them as actresses even if they were employed during the shooting of the film or have been collaborating with Cavalli before and after the film. Despite his non-chauvnist credentials, Cavalli too utters some disturbing lines during his theatrical performance, and thus gives a problematic light to his adaptation. When it comes to the portrayal of masculinity, even if the actors use almost the same language to that from the Tavianis' film, the "mafia" references are not as emphasized as in the film. Men are portrayed less aggressively than on the cinematic

screen. The atmosphere around the performance in general is not so tense like in the film.

When it comes to the portrayal of Julius Caesar himself, the analyses of both the performance text and para-texts have shown how reenactors engrandize him, and how the Tavianis' consider him a more controversial, even somewhat darker figure. The film is, like Shakespeare's play itself, much more focused on Brutus than on Caesar, unlike the reenactment, and even Cavalli's play. However, the analysis of the performance text and para-texts of the film and prison-theater play have demonstrated that both the Tavianis and Cavalli claim Caesar for contemporary Italians, and maintain the idea of Roman roots of the Italian culture and Roman culture being present in Italian identity today. While the reenactment (especially in its para-texts) decries the conspirators (NotizieRoma 2018, 10:14), Tavianis' and Cavalli's presentation of them is much more similar to Shakespeare's, and their motivation is depicted as ambivalent at times, if not even idealistic and republican. Like in the source text, Brutus is depicted in the film as a tormented republican martyr, struggling to accept what appears to be inevitable. In this way the film takes Shakespeare's play even further and it comes closely, but does not transgress the line, to almost justifying Caesar's cinematic assassination. Just like the paratexts of the reenactment serve the purpose of celebrating and empathizing with Caesar, so the extra-diegetic music within the film enhances empathizing with Brutus and

other conspirators. In a way the music neutralizes the violence inherent to the play text, contrary of the sound recordings of the reenactment.

While the reenactment tries to emulate the grandeur of Caesar's Rome, in the Tavianis' film and in Cavalli's staging there is a dichotomy between the grand historical event and the irony of playing it in the prison. Crying for Caesar within the archeological site at *Largo Argentina* and in front of the ruins of Caesar's temple in the Roman forum leaves a much different impression than seeing the prisoners' stab Caesar who looks – go figure – just like one of them. Even if the male violence permeates the Tavianis film, and in a slightly lesser measure the performance on the stage of the prison theater, in both of these performances there is still room for empathizing with the conspirators much more than in the reenactment. On the other hand, a strategy used to problematize the conspirators is the employment of language related to organized crime. The Tavianis build on Cavalli's practice of translating the plays prisoners perform in their dialects and they force it to match onto what scholars have recognized as "the language of Mafia culture" (Calbi 2014, 242). This language then suggests a type of masculinity associated to the protagonists: violence, aggression, excess, foul language, bad temper. In this way the Tavianis' add another layer to the performance, a layer not inherent to the play text. On the cinematic screen the allusions of this language are potentiated more than on the stage of the

prison theater where aggression and violence are very restricted.

Cavalli's play differs from the reenactment and the Tavianis' film also in the sense that it sticks more closely to Shakespeare's script. Cavalli, however, also cuts the script a lot and his staging partially mirrors the structure of the reenactment, it all ends with Caesar's assassination. Less than the Tavianis' does he problematize Julius Caesar. Quite the contrary, in the non-Shakespearean scene he adds, Caesar is represented at least ambiguously, if not positively. He is definitely a great Roman, even if it is clear that he wants to be a monarch. He is less negative than in the play text itself. He shows aggression because Cicero attacks him, but otherwise he is not presented particularly negatively, he is simply a man who defends himself (Cavalli 2013a 11:00). In that way Cavalli offers a re-interpretation not only of the play but also of the historical Caesar much more than the Tavianis who present him more like a contemporary Mafia boss.

With regards to the second research question, the research has shown that the reenactors come from all walks of life, however, that there is a very high profile among a part of them and especially among their collaborators. Longo points out that their costumes cost "several thousand euros" (Longo 2012) which implies that it is very difficult to be a serious reenactor if one doesn't have money. The

same goes for the 180€ membership fee that the members of GSR pay.

Furthermore, even if they don't have degrees in acting or scriptwriting, there are a lot of people on high places who support their reenactments so they manage to claim authority for themselves in that way. The fact that they have army generales, ex-bankers and politician, different university professors of Roman history from their "Scientific Committee" among their members shows that this is a very high profile organization. Secondly, since they collaborate with the scientific director of the archeological excavations at the site of Caesar's assassination and with the Association of Roman Archeologists on the reenactment of the Ides of March, they are able to claim historical accuracy and authenticity for the reenactment. Along these lines comes their statement that the reenactment is "staged with serious scientific standards" (arriveder lestelle 2017, 01:00). This is mirrored also by my ethnographic field work. As I mentioned in my analysis, I was personally reproached for my hair-style and inadequate footwear on the occasion of the reenactment. The para-texts claim that the reenactment is developed in collaboration with the Capitoline Superintendence and under the supervision of the Scientific Director of the archeological site itself and the Department of Historical, Philosophical, Social Sciences, Cultural Heritage and Territory of the University of Rome Tor Vergata" (Terentivs, 2014a, 2015; Ingrao 2015), as well as "under the supervision of the scientific director of the area" (Terentivs 2015), even if the research data show that

the reenactors themselves made the reenactment the way it is. However, this all legitimizes their work and give them a more serious image in public. All of these collaborators are then in that sense important just as the reenactors themselves. One can see that these are all fairly prestigious collaborators, important for the reconstruction of Caesar's assassination. This image of serious approach is strengthened also by the protocols and additional collaboration agreements and sponsorships by a Department from the University of Rome Tor Vergata, with the Directorate General for Antiquities of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, as well as with the Department for Cultural Policies and Historic Centre and the Department for Educational, School, Family and Youth Policies of the city of Rome (Iacomoni, 2019d). Their profile is even more prominent and prestigious when one takes into account the findings that the reenactment was also publicized on the website of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage (Giovanetti 2018) and that the reenactors were supported by other top ranking institutions such as the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, that is the Italian government, the Region *Lazio*, the Province of Rome (as cited in Iacomoni 2019d), Spanish and Romanian Embassies in Rome (as cited in La Redazione de il Tabloid 2017).

What is more, GSR's reenactments were supported by different presidents of Italian Republic: Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (as cited in Sofia 2018), Giorgio Napolitano (as cited in Terentivs 2014b), and current president Sergio Mattarella (as cited in Colnago 2017; Redazione Romadailynews

2019b). They have awarded 7 golden medals to GSR for the organization of the Birthday of Rome (Rossetti 2015), and 1 silver medal for their Historic-Didactic Museum of Roman Legionary (Quartieri 2015). The data show that GSR's social and cultural capital has been growing, and this is demonstrated by the fact that the press conference that marked the celebration of the 25th anniversary of GSR in 2019 was held at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament (Pupia News 2019). Consequently, it is not strange that the main roles in the reenactment are regularly played by more prominent members within the association itself.

This all contrasts the Tavianis' low-income, working class prisoners who turned to crime partly because of poverty. The beginning of the Tavianis' film shows that these are predominantly people from small town and villages of the Italian south. The reenactment than especially contrasts the Cavalli's staging, where for some rehearsals some prisoners were missing because they were, luckily for them, released from prison. Because of that Cavalli's casting differs from the Tavianis' film and that's why Fabio Cavalli himself played Julius Caesar in the rehearsal of the play I analyzed in the thesis. Cavalli cannot boast of institutional support such as reenactors, and even Tavianis, who may seem the giants of the Italian film industry, struggled hardly to get funding and a distributor for their film. So in that sense the reenactors are in a better position, even if reenactment is "officially" only a hobby for them. Cavalli stated that a lot of different big names of the industry came there before the

Tavianis and presented various ideas, but “only the Tavianis stayed” (Canessa 2012). The truth is, however, that after the film it was only Cavalli who stayed with the prisoners and continued working with the prisoners. In fact, in 2019 he made a film *Viaggio in Italia: la Corte costituzionale nelle carceri* (A Trip to Italy: the Constitutional Court in Italian Prisons), in which he wanted to raise awareness of the living conditions and rights of the prisoners within Italian prisons (Cavalli 2019).

Furthermore, the second part of this research question is more complex and requires a more elaborate response. When it comes to the reenactment, the surveys demonstrated that reenactors were particularly inspired by Julius Caesar, the Ides of March. Their answers mirror the para-texts and support conform to the reenactment’s celebration of Caesar. Coming to the goals and purposes of GSR as a collective, the research has shown that there is the aim of branding themselves as guardians of Roman history and Roman and Italian identity, something institutions are supposed to be doing, but as reenactors have repeatedly emphasized, they are not (ariveder lestelle 2017, 2:02; Otto J 2018, 0:08; GSR 2019a). They promote themselves as being motivated by “the passion for ancient Rome” (ariveder lestelle 2017, 01:30).

Furthermore, dressing up seems to be a motivation for some of them. As I emphasized in my ethnography, this was something that struck me immediately during my field work. In a review of the reenactment of the Ides of March

44 BC from 2010, one of the reenactors wrote that “dressing up, taking off modern clothes and putting on ‘stage costumes’ gives, as if by magic, the feeling of a leap in time capable of transforming the Centocelle junkyard into CAIVS IVLIVS, or the employee of the Bank of Italy in MAGILLA, a sullen Optio” (Angelini 2010, xvii). This contrasts the conditions of the prison theater and the life in prison, as well as the strategies employed in the Tavianis’ film and the Cavalli’s adaptation. Even if there is a sense that some of the actors look as nice as they can, this definitely cannot compete with “several thousand Euro” (Longo 2012) costumes of the reenactors. The overall shabbiness of the prison setting, both in the film and in the recording of the prison-theater performance, contrasts the grandeur that the reenactors are motivated to embody and reconstruct.

Finally, one interviewee mentioned some very personal reasons for starting to reenact ancient Rome that had to do with being bullied in his childhood. However, even if there may always be the chance that on a more personal note other protagonists may have considered such personal stories, this line of research was impossible to take because it is very difficult to get people to open themselves like this to a researcher. On a bit less deep level, this also implies to what another reenactor wrote on the occasion of the Ides in 2010: “When we return to the headquarters [after the performance of the Ides], we go back into our modern clothes, knowing however that within us there is always a

friend of ours dressed as an ancient Roman” (Angelini 2010, xvii).

On the other side, the goals and motivations of the Tavianis and Cavalli seem to be very different from those of the reenactors. The prisoners buy largely into the Tavianis’ reading of the historical event, and they understand the Ides through their own personal stories. The film text and the para-texts on a more superficial note suggested that the Tavianis wanted to make a film of the life in prison, however, after doing a more in-depth research new data emerged that showed that the Tavianis considered the Ides of March an Italian story able to transcend time, embedded in the national cultural consciousness. On different occasions they mentioned that this is an “Italian story”, their “emotional patrimony”, that “belongs to them” (RB Casting 2012; Film at Lincoln Center 2012, 29:40; Catelli 2012; Cineforum Arcific Omegna 2012; ANAC autori 2018). This is particularly important because it is similar to how the reenactors see the Ides of March. Here however it is even more important to discern opposite political backgrounds that the Tavianis and reenactors come from. Tavianis have a strong leftist, even communist background and filmic opus strongly characterized by anti-fascist themes and motives, while the reenactors are associated with conservative politics and their narrative does remind of the understanding of Julius Caesar and the Ides of March in the *Ventennio*. So the Tavianis’ approach to history and to this specific play shapes the film in a way that it presents the conspirators as republican idealists, even if they do not

actually justify the killing of the tyrant in the end. Just like the reenactors, they are also cutting much of Shakespeare's play to create a framework to tell the story they want to tell, that of struggling Brutus (against the reenactors' celebration of Caesar).

The film is a commercial product intended for the mass market so in that sense it differs strongly from the reenactment and even more from Cavalli's play. Cavalli is therefore much truer to the source text. Since he also cuts the play and adds a non-Shakespearean scene, the end product compromises his adaptation as a "simple" production of Shakespeare's play. His end product is also a revisitation of the historical event and Julius Caesar, be it for his historical motivations. In this revisitation, he is not negative towards Caesar like the Tavianis, quite the contrary. He presents a great Caesar, with monarchic aspirations, but still great.

When it comes to the prisoners more particularly, as the analysis of the para-texts (mainly their autobiographies) has demonstrated, their participation is motivated also by a desire to show oneself to the public, to be on stage (Cavalli 2004; Caiffa 2017; Rega 2017, 335), very similarly to the reenactors. However, an important result of their endeavours must be closely connected to their motivation: the cathartic effect of prison-theater. This is evidenced in their auto-biographies as well as in the captions on the screen at the end of the Tavianis' film. What is more, the analysis of the para-texts has shown that the prisoners do

not exclusively mirror the judgement of Caesar. In this sense Rega's performance of Mark Antony's oration in front of temple of Caesar in the Roman Forum matches the reenactors' performance and alludes to their aims of celebrating Caesar.

The catharsis effect mentioned in the above paragraph points to the third research question, the impact of the productions on performers. The impact of the film and Cavalli's adaptation on the prisoners was definitely manifested in rethinking their own lives in the context of the Ides of March (Valentini 2016, 189). The consequence, then, of this cathartic experience is the fact that among 518 of Cavalli's prison-actors, only 12 of them returned to crime later (Di Fabio, 2015, 169). This is lower even from the ratio of the famous Shakespeare Behind Bars programme, that has a 6% recidivism rate (Shakespeare Behind Bars n.d.). This actually contrasts the play itself because it actually doesn't free the assassins but makes them pay with their lives the price of the conspiracy.

Where reenactment and prison theater have the same impact on the performers is in creating a sense of community among them. This was reported by several reenactors during my field work and by the protagonists of the Tavianis' film in their autobiographies (Arcuri 2011, 103; Striano 2016e, 86). The impact of the performance in relation to the historical event was that they first take over the Tavianis' reading of the historical even but then look at it through their own past. The analysis has shown different

explicit examples of this, e.g. Striano comparing Brutus with Neapolitan Masaniello, Rega talking about Caesars form their own lives. The film also made them identify with historical personages on a daily basis on a more concrete level: they continued using their theatrical names just like reenactors many times do (Striano 2016e, 88, 126; Montorfano 2015, 93).

Just how much the reenactment means to the reenactors is evident from the statement of the founder and the president of *GSR* on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the association, celebrated at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament. Iacomoni stated that for him that was a “milestone that (he) couldn't reach either with his first wife or (his) second wife” (Pupia News 2019, 03:30).

As the vice president of *GSR*, Carlone, stated, “for the reenactors, to do the Ides of March is very emotional thing” (Carlone 2018, 00:01). Scarpelli also emphasizes that “for the reenactors of ancient Rome, the idea of knowing better and staging a 'proper' past, towards which a high level of imaginative engagement is expressed” is very important (Scarpelli 2017, 202). The data also support this theory that they consider Roman past as their own. So this also goes back to the question of motivation, goals and purposes of the performers and the impact is that they feel a part of this history.

When it comes to fourth research question, the meanings of these productions in their socio-political context of production and distribution, the research has clearly shown

that the connections of Roman history and Italians today is something reenactors from GSR stress often, and is something that more subtly permeates the performance text and the para-texts of the film and the prison play. However, the most controversial here is definitely the reenactment with its elements that match onto the associations with the Fascist regime: 'lictors' carrying *fasces lictorii*, "the emblem of Fascism par excellence" (Dunnett 2006, 245), that do not exist in Shakespeare's play, have been recognized as problematic in this sense in the media and by the local government (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). Their description of the para-texts sometimes reminds of what Mussolini said for the Ides of March (GSR 2019a, Nelis 2007, 406) and reminds of the importance of the commemoration of the Ides under Fascism.

Also the direct connections of ancient Romans and contemporary Italians is something else that latently connects Fascist (Melotti, 2015) and reenactors' approach to Roman history. As Mussolini himself wrote on the Ides of March: "For the Italian people all is eternal and contemporary. For us it is as if Caesar was stabbed just yesterday. It is something proper to the Italian people, something which no other people have to the same extent" (as cited in Nelis 2007, 396). This is very similar to the words of professor Malavolta of GSR's Scientific Committee, who in a radio conference on the occasion of the reenactment of the Ides in 2018 stated that these reenactments are reenactments of "the events that are part of the collective past of us Italians, reliving the Roman

history through these occasions also means to penetrate a little into the ancestral memory of our memory as an Italian nation" (as cited in Carlone 2018, 15:00). Reenactors too in certain ways are „inculcating a new Italian identity and self-consciousness by constant reference to an idealised image of the Roman past“, something Nelis says for the Fascists (Nelis 2014, 11).

Furthermore, the route of the reenactors' procession is also telling in that sense because it passes along the topoi built or heavily marked in the last century by Mussolini. They are "iconic 'Mussolinian'" monuments (Nelis 2014, 8). Also, the reenactors' tradition of placing a laurel wreath at the statue of Caesar is, as it was shown in the analysis, a tradition established by Mussolini (Istituto Luce Cinecittà 2012b). The connections with Fascism spill over their other reenactments and over collaborations with politicians with Fascist connections. However, even with these explicit matchings I cannot say that I ever felt during my field work that I thought the reenactors to be Fascists.

When it comes to the Tavianis' film, as the analysis has shown, even if it was recognized as a "refuge from the country's political and cultural impasse" (Bassi 2016, 17), I see this expression of Italy's "collective unconscious" as highly attached to Julius Caesar and Roman history when it comes it's national and cultural identity and a proof of country's bondage to Caesar and Roman history. "Shakespeare [or rather Caesar in my opinion] becomes here a vehicle to reclaim the classical roots of Italian

culture” (Bassi 2016, 195). This makes the film a “story of Italians discovering a central figure in their culture”, as it was recognized in a critique (Prot 2012). In scholarly interpretations of the assassination scene, the fact that the prisoners convicted for related crimes are enacting Caesar's murder completely dominates the discussions, and the contemporary aspect of the film prevails, perhaps unjustly, over the historical narrative, put in the background in these analyses. The evidence from the para-texts proves that the Tavianis, Cavalli and Striano, if not the whole cast, had contemporary Italian politics in mind when they were making the film and thinking about tyrants (Crespi 2012; Servizio Pubblico 2013, 7:20; Montorfano 2012, 49; Bassi 2016, 214). Be it perhaps inspired by Silvio Berlusconi, definitely a controversial the protagonist on Italian political stage since 1994 and also connected in the media with the criminal organizations evoked in the film, or another Italian politician, this shows how the film establishes a connection between Julius Caesar and Italians today, because the film text alone suggests that the context of reference is Italy and not any other country (Montorfano 2012, 49; Bassi 2016, 214).

In order to answer all of the above research questions I was referring to both the performance text and the para-texts. These para-texts predominantly originated from Facebook and they best show how important Facebook is for decyphering the meanings of the cases studied in this thesis. Facebook is a platform where the reenactors’

narrative is promoted, and is a place where the cultural and social capital of their reenactments is promoted, strengthened, newly acquired and reinforced. Their reenactment would not have the same meaning if it weren't for the images and videos of the performances that are then widely shared, commented and liked among each other on Facebook (Giancristofaro 2017, 26). As Giancristofaro points out, "this characteristic suggests that the first users of this communication are, more than tourists, the members of the community themselves" (Giancristofaro 2017, 99).

The fifth research question also stresses the importance of Facebook. Research has shown that the Municipality of Rome, Ministry of Culture, and mayor of Rome personally have been using Facebook to promote and live stream the reenactment of the Ides of March in the last several years. Even the current mayor of Rome has been supporting the reenactments as a celebration of the Italianness and the roots and an important aspect of Italian identity. In addition, Eleonora Guadagno, the president of the Commission for Culture of the City of Rome, in 2019 invited "all those who in everyday life feel the pride and roots of Romanity" to attend the GSR's Birthday of Rome (Guadagno 2019). In a similar way the press that was sympathetic of the reenactments interpreted this as a quest for "rediscovery of own roots" (Zorfini 2016). Even 10 years before that, the press has interpreted GSR's activities as "rediscovering the past and their roots" (Sansonetti 2007).

Data from Google also showed how important digital platforms are for GSR, especially for commercial services they offer. As I have shown, only on the Facebook page of BBC News the video reportage of the Gladiator School was visualized by 421,778 people (BBC News 2019). Also Ben Stiller's short video clip from The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon where he joked about his experience at GSR's Gladiator School was viewed by 538,247, thus giving them worldwide visibility (Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon 2016).

Furthermore, the analyses have also shown that not all the public appreciated their efforts and were suspicious of their meanings, e.g. already in 1994, a journalist raised the question of their Roman reenactments being "delusions of grandeur of some nationalist zealots" (as cited in GSR 2019f). In fact, media report that in 2019 the mayor of Rome "denied the support of Natale di Roma because the standards, eagles and *fasci* would remind of fascism" (Barlozzari, Curridori 2019). In the same article reenactor from GSR complained that "the relationship with the various administrations has always been problematic because there is still that cultural prejudice that identifies Romanity as something nostalgic and belonging to the *Ventennio*" (ibid.). In the last two years I participated in the reenactment, the 'Brutuses' were interrupted by persons from the audience who supported Caesar. This was also caught on a Facebook and YouTube video recordings (Immagini romane 2016, 13:05; Longinuspileus 2018, 08:05, 2019, 05:01; Parco archeologico del Colosseo 2019, 05:28,

06:20). However, the dominant reaction is a positive one because people who don't like the reenactments do not watch them, either *in situ* or on Facebook.

Facebook audience predominantly praised the reenactment of the Ides of March. This understanding of the reenactment as a symbol of their identity has been recognized by a part of the audience (some were "incredibly deeply moved", "proud of our history", "our history!", Roma Capitale 2018c; "Caput mundi!!!! Rome I love you my immense love", "Thanks to those who keep the history alive!", "Great historical Roman Group, people - men and women with soul, heart and a huge passion - Loving Rome! Congratulations" Roma Capitale 2019a). In fact, even some non-Italian users exalted the reenactment as a demonstration of greatness of the Italian history and identity ("I'm not an Italian, but I tell you you must be proud of your country, Rome is the center of the world, the center of culture, the center of everything live ROME", Roma Capitale 2018c).

There was more interaction among the audience members than between the audience and the reenactors. Very few commentators did not like or trolled the videos. Overall the live streaming managed to create a community (even an international and inter-continental one) around this video and some users actually said they were able to see more on their phone than when they attended the event at the archeological site.

The research has shown that this patriotic reactions were not exclusively tied to the reenactment, but also to the Tavianis' film. As the Tavianis stated, when they won the Golden Bear, some people "put the national flag on their balconies", as if it were a national holiday. They commented that in some people's eyes they "became patriots" (Tassi 2012) and they received "a lot of messages and hundreds of phone calls in which everyone said 'thank you for Italy'" (Sorrentini 2012; Morgoglione 2012). Even the minister of culture Ornaghi stated that in that period the government was "trying to give a new image of Italy, and the film helped them" (Morgoglione 2012). Even Italian film critics recognized *JC* as "an 'Italian' tragedy, which tells a crucial moment in the history of Italy" (Taddei n.d.).

This sense of community the film awakened also manifested in the fact that the award from Berlin was celebrated in Italian press as a victory of the Italian national film style, and these "nationalistic" and "ecumenical manifestations of the Italian pride" were recognized by journalists and by the renowned Italian film director and distributor Nanni Moretti (Morgoglione 2012). Chiti notes that the film was "trumpeted as a masterpiece by a biased press with the sole purpose of glorifying an entire national cinema" (Chiti 2012). This connects the film with the tradition of Italian cinema as a cultural ambassador and vehicle for generating pride in national identity like in silent Roman history films (Wyke 1997, 48). In the the Fascist era Roman films were a useful and effective tool that helped homogenize Italians around an idea of

inheriting the greatness of ancient Rome (Wyke 1997, 49, 220-221).

Facebook, however, was not the social network most important for the audience reception of the film. Instead it was the Internet Movie Database, where 6,021 users voted on the film and gave the high average “7,3” vote. Also the data consulted showed that 7,01% of these users came from the US, that showed again an international reception.

The film received huge attention in public and in the media, and it was almost exclusively highly praised. Cavalli’s play on the other hand is tied to a very closed and restricted community and the production could not reach wider audiences for obvious reasons. The prisoners cannot use Facebook and social media for legal and security issues. However, the data has shown that the directors of the play, Cavalli, and the protagonists, Rega and Striano, have been followed by thousands of Facebook users and have been using Facebook for raising awareness of the problems of the life in Italian prisons and of the human rights of the prisoners. Both Rega and Striano participate in the political debates on Facebook on daily base.

9. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future work

Admittedly, these are not the only commemorations of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March in Italy. Another conservative association in Rome has commemorated Caesar's death in a similar way before. A video recording available on YouTube shows that in 2007 the "'Legionaries' of Legio X Gemina PFD [of the *Associazione culturale SPQR*], authorized by the State Archaeological Superintendence, crossed the Forum and then reached the statue of Caesar in *Via dei Fori Imperiali* where they laid a laurel wreath" (*Associazione culturale SPQR* 2008). Other video recordings testify that they did this in 2009 and in 2011, when "legionaries, pretorians, senators and vestal virgins" participated (*Associazione culturale SPQR* 2009, 00:50, 2011a). In 2009 and in 2011 they recited a commemorative speech in Latin in front of the archeological site of *Area sacra* at *Largo di Torre Argentina* (Marin, Paolocci 2009; *Associazione culturale SPQR* 2011a, 00:45). Again, their project is a commemoration of Julius Caesar, and not of the conspirators.

As TV reporters noted, in 2011 the honour guard was „snubbed by the Romans. Tourists aside, in fact, most of the citizens remained indifferent to the celebrations that took place at *Largo Argentina*“ (*Associazione culturale SPQR* 2011a, 00:45). On that occasion Giorgio Franchetti, then the president of the association, stated that "they reenact events from the history of Romans, our people, we

are Romans so we do it with great passion“. They consider themselves Romans (Associazione culturale SPQR 2011a, 01:05). Franchetti was even writing a book about the Ides, “a historical essay, a criminological, psychological reexamination, with an investigative approach and detective method to thoroughly investigate the dark sides of Caesar's murder” (Franchetti 2018). There is even a video trailer from 2016 that announces the book that, however, has not been published yet. In the trailer there are several photographs of SPQR's reenactment of the Ides in 'historical' costumes, very similar to those of the 'senators' from GSR, and at an archeological site. The video claims for the book „un indagine storica, con metodo scientifico” and together with a reproduction of Brutus's EID MAR coin claims authority and authenticity for the book (Franchetti 2016, 00:55). Their reenactment is in some respect very similar to GSR's. It was performed at Largo Argentina. In fact, the press release for the reenactment in 2013 described the reenactment as “the representation of the assassination and the reading of historical sources related to the event. Afterwards there will be a historical procession that will reach the statue of Julius Caesar in *Via dei Fori Imperiali*. During the procession and at the foot of the statue further passages from the works of Suetonius, Plutarch and Cassius Dio will be read” (Zetema 2013). In that sense this reenactment is more historically accurate than GSR's which is based predominantly on Shakespeare. Like GSR's reenactment, this one also ended with a deposition of a laurel wreath at Caesar's statue (Zetema 2013).

Furthermore, another commemoration of Julius Caesar on the anniversary of the Ides has been organized in different forms in Rimini since 2014 (Comune di Rimini 2016), a town that received Caesar's statue as a gift by Benito Mussolini, and the commemoration is focused on the statue itself. The celebrations are organized by another reenactment association, *Legio XIII Gemina – Arminium*, with the patronage of the Municipality and in collaboration with other organizations - *L'Associazione Ricerche Iconografiche e Storiche* (Aries) and, more importantly, with the Command of the military station *Giulio Cesare* in Rimini (Legio XIII Gemina 2019a). The program is focused on “interventions of the organizers with maneuvers of the legion and reading of Latin and contemporary historical texts, taken from *De bello civile* by Julius Caesar and from the volume *Cleopatra* by Alberto Angela, followed by a deposition of a floral tribute” to the statue of Caesar (Legio XIII Gemina 2019a). Again, the commemoration is informed by the historical sources and is a celebration not of the conspirators, but of Caesar, “a great leader and historical figure, who changed the course of history” (*ibid.*). The press release from 2016 shows that the reenactment included “a recital of Antony's monologue from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*” (Rimini turismo 2016). In fact, in another post on the occasion of the Ides in 2019 they have indicated “twinning with *Decima Legio and GSR*”, the protagonists of the reenactment of the Ides in Rome (Legio XIII Gemina 2019b).

What is more, this reenactment of sort is preceded by a conference held at the aforementioned military station and representatives of important institutions were present at the reenactment: from State Police, Municipal Police, Financial Police, Air Force, and Navy. As a local journalist reports, these “have witnessed the oath read by a young soldier and the decoration of the centurion 'Manius Metellus Oceanus', distinguished in a daring military action” (Pagammo 2019). This means that the reenactment had another short scene, not publicized in the press release, where the emphasis was exclusively on Caesar.

Finally, other citizens and associations honor on the Ides in a similar way Caesar's memory both in Rome and in other cities. One of these is *Movimento Tradizionale Romano*, a movement focused on safeguarding and reviving ancient Roman traditions, that every year on the Ides commemorates Caesar's statue with flowers in *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, since almost 30 years (AmoRomA 2011, 2012, 2014; AssociazioneSimeone 2012, 01:00). Other citizens and groups of citizens spontaneously honor Caesar by bestowing flowers upon his statue (Wyke 1999, 170), flowers and letters at his burning place at the Forum (Boccacci 2016; Pistone 2017, 04:18; Longinuspileus 2018), by reading texts from Classical authors, blessing the city and the people (Canzano 2012a, 2012b), by reciting Mark Antony's oration (Felsineus 2012, Pistone 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Boccacci 2016). 'Love', signed by 'Cleopatra', states a little note full of red hearts. “I'd pick you out of a thousand others”, states another note (Boccacci 2016). They

do it also in other Italian cities. In Udine an NGO places a flowers next to Caesaer's statue and at the water well at Pozzuolo del Friuli, that Caesar had wanted dug (Fogolar Civic 2016).

Therefore, looking more into these examples, even if they are not even closely impactful as the case studies in the film, would be a possible direction in the future research. What is more, finding other examples of the commemoration or problematization of Julius Caesar in an international context would be useful.

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