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## Ciclo di letture bibliche su “Bibbia e letteratura”

Conferenza di **Piero Boitani** sul tema

### Shakespeare e la Bibbia

**martedì 15 ottobre 2013 alle ore 20.30**

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#### Il tema

La Bibbia inglese, quella di Re Giacomo, e i drammi di Shakespeare sono coevi, pietre di fondazione, entrambi, della lingua e della letteratura inglese. È un dato culturalmente significativo. Ma ancor più importante è l'uso che Shakespeare fa della Scrittura, che incornicia per esempio i *Sonetti* e costituisce il sottotesto di alcune tra le maggiori tragedie del drammaturgo inglese, come *Otello*, *Macbeth* e *Re Lear*. Qui, la voce potente dell'Antico Testamento suggerisce temi fondamentali quali il monoteismo geloso di Dio e la rivolta del Male, o inserisce nella parabola di Lear il «paradigma-Giobbe». Tuttavia, già nel *Re Lear* vengono introdotti temi del Nuovo Testamento e balugina per un attimo una ricomposizione d'amore con la figura di Cordelia e del padre che vorrebbero essere «spie di Dio». *Amleto*, diviso in due dal viaggio verso l'Inghilterra, prospetta alla fine una visione evangelica: «C'è una provvidenza speciale nella caduta dei passeri», dice il Principe di Danimarca citando Matteo. Tutti gli ultimi drammi di Shakespeare, i cosiddetti «drammi romanzeschi» – *Pericle*, *Cimbelino*, *Racconto d'inverno*, *Tempesta* – mettono in scena una buona novella immanente che comprende perfino la resurrezione: sono il «nuovo testamento» di William Shakespeare.

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#### Il relatore

Piero Boitani, socio dell'Accademia dei Lincei, della British Academy e della Medieval Academy of America, è titolare di Letterature Comparete alla «Sapienza» di Roma e all'Università della Svizzera Italiana di Lugano. I suoi libri più recenti includono *Parole alate. Voli nella poesia e nella storia da Omero all'11 settembre* (Milano, Mondadori, 2004), *Prima lezione sulla letteratura* (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2007), *Sulle orme di Ulisse* (Bologna, Il Mulino 2007), *Letteratura europea e Medioevo volgare* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007), *Il grande racconto delle stelle* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012), *Dante e il suo futuro* (Roma, Storia e Letteratura, 2013) e *Letteratura e verità* (Roma, Studium, 2013). Sull'influsso esercitato dalla Bibbia sulla letteratura va citato *Ri-Scritture* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997). Sul tema della conferenza si segnala *Il Vangelo secondo Shakespeare* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2009).

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#### Testi allegati

William Shakespeare, passi di *Amleto*, *Otello*, *Macbeth*, *Re Lear*, *Il racconto d'inverno*. *Sonetti*.

# William Shakespeare

## 1. *Amleto*

V, 1: I becchini sulla tomba di Ofelia

PRIMO BUFFONE Non ci sono gentiluomini antichi quanto i giardinieri, gli sterratori e i becchini. Tengono alto il mestiere di Adamo.

SECONDO BUFFONE Adamo era davvero un gentiluomo?

PRIMO BUFFONE Fu il primo che mai portasse *arms*.

SECONDO BUFFONE No, Adamo non le aveva.

PRIMO BUFFONE Ma che dici, sei pagano? Come leggi la Scrittura? La Scrittura dice che Adamo scavò. Come poteva scavare senza braccia? [*What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms?*]

.....

AMLETO Quel cranio una volta aveva una lingua dentro di sé, e sapeva cantare. E guarda come il mascalzone lo getta a terra come se fosse la mandibola di Caino, che commise il primo assassinio!

III, 3

CLAUDIO Il mio peccato è marcio. Il suo fetore / Raggiunge il Cielo. Ha addosso / La prima maledizione, la più antica, / L'assassinio di un fratello. [*It hath the primal eldest curse upon't, / A brother's murder.*]

### III, 1

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? To die, to sleep...  
No more, and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep.  
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life,  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.

Essere, o non essere, questo è il dilemma:  
se sia più nobile nella mente soffrire  
i colpi di fionda e i dardi dell'oltraggiosa fortuna  
o prendere le armi contro un mare di affanni  
e, contrastandoli, porre loro fine? Morire, dormire...  
nient'altro, e con un sonno dire che poniamo fine  
al dolore del cuore e ai mille tumulti naturali  
di cui è erede la carne: è una conclusione  
da desiderarsi devotamente. Morire, dormire.  
Dormire, forse sognare. Sì, qui è l'ostacolo,  
perché in quel sonno di morte quali sogni possano venire  
dopo che ci siamo cavati di dosso questo groviglio mortale  
deve farci esitare. È questo lo scrupolo

che dà alla sventura una vita così lunga.  
Perché chi sopporterebbe le frustate e gli scherni del tempo,  
il torto dell'oppressore, la contumelia dell'uomo superbo,  
gli spasimi dell'amore disprezzato, il ritardo della legge,  
l'insolenza delle cariche ufficiali, e il disprezzo  
che il merito paziente riceve dagli indegni,  
quando egli stesso potrebbe darsi quietanza  
con un semplice stiletto? Chi porterebbe fardelli,  
grugnendo e sudando sotto il peso di una vita faticosa,  
se non fosse che il terrore di qualcosa dopo la morte,  
il paese inesplorato dalla cui frontiera  
nessun viaggiatore fa ritorno, sconcerata la volontà  
e ci fa sopportare i mali che abbiamo  
piuttosto che accorrere verso altri che ci sono ignoti?  
Così la coscienza ci rende tutti codardi,  
e così il colore naturale della risolutezza  
è reso malsano dalla pallida cera del pensiero,  
e imprese di grande altezza e momento  
per questa ragione deviano dal loro corso  
e perdono il nome di azione.

V, 2, 166-170

Not a whit. We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man knows aught he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

Niente affatto. Sfidiamo i presagi. C'è una speciale provvidenza anche nella caduta di un passero. Se è ora, non sarà dopo. Se non sarà dopo, sarà ora. Se non è ora, tuttavia sarà. Essere pronti è tutto. Poiché nessun uomo sa qualcosa di ciò che lascia, che importa lasciare prima del tempo? Sia così.

Cf. Matteo 10, 29: Due passerini non si vendono forse per un soldo? Eppure neanche uno di essi cadrà a terra senza che il Padre vostro lo voglia.

## 2. *Sonetti*

1.

From fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,  
But as the ripper should by time decease,  
His tender heir might bear his memory:  
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,  
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,  
Making a famine where abundance lies,  
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.  
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament  
And only herald to the gaudy spring,  
Within thine own bud buriest thy content  
And, tender churl, makest waste in niggarding.  
    Pity the world, or else this glutton be,  
    To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

Cf. Genesi 1, 28, «crescete e moltiplicatevi»; Isaia 32, 5.

154.

The little Love-god lying once asleep  
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,  
Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep  
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand  
The fairest votary took up that fire  
Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;  
And so the general of hot desire  
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.  
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,  
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,  
Growing a bath and healthful remedy  
For men diseased; but I, my mistress' thrall,  
    Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,  
    Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

Cf. Cantico dei Cantici.

73.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere soon.

### 3. Otello

I, 1: tentazione di Eva da parte del Serpente, il quale evoca la proclamazione divina a Mosè. Iago, *I am not what I am*: cf. Esodo 3, 14, *Ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, «Sono colui che Sono».

IV, 1: Iago di Otello: *He's that he is*, E' quello che è: io non posso / Pronunciarmi su come dovrebbe essere (*might be*); / Se quello che dovrebbe essere non è, / Il cielo voglia che lo sia (*if, as he might, he is not, / I would to heaven he were!*).

V, 2: Otello, uccidendo Desdemona: *I, that am cruel, am yet merciful*: Io sono crudele / Ma sono anche pietoso.

V, 2: Otello dopo l'assassinio di Desdemona: *That's he that was Othello: here I am*

Otello è il Dio geloso dell'Esodo.

#### 4. *Macbeth*

I, 1: le streghe. Cf. Saul che consulta lo spirito di Samuele tramite la strega in 1 Samuele 28.

II, 3, 68-9: cf. 1 Samuele 24, 11.

V, 5, 19-28

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

Cf. Salmi 22, 15 per «dusty death»; Salmi 39, 7 e Giobbe 8, 9 per «walking shadow»; Giobbe 18, 6, Salmi 18, 28 e Proverbi 20, 27 per «brief candle».

## 5. *Re Lear*

II, 4, 269-71

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need! –  
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,  
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!

Voi Cieli, datemi la pazienza,  
di pazienza ho bisogno! – Dèi, mi vedete qui, povero vecchio  
carico di dolore quanto d'anni,  
reso infelice dagli uni e dagli altri.

III, 2, 1-9

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow! / You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout /  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! / Vaunt-curriers of oak-cleaving  
thunderbolts, / Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, / Strike flat the thick ro-  
tundity o' th' world! / Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once / That makes ingrate-  
ful man!

Soffiate, venti, squarciatevi le guance!  
Infuriate! Soffiate! Voi cateratte e uragani,  
sgorgate dal cielo a sommergere i nostri campanili,  
ad annegare i galli sopra i tetti!  
Voi fuochi sulfurei rapidi come il pensiero,  
forieri di fulmini che squarciano querce,  
scotennatemi il capo canuto! E tu, tuono che tutto  
scuoti, schiaccia il ventre rotondo del mondo,  
spezza lo stampo della natura,  
spargi e disperdi tutte le sementi  
che fanno l'uomo ingrato!

III, 4, 28-36

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,  
And show the heavens more just.



Poveri nudi miserabili, ovunque voi siate,  
soggetti alla gragnola di questa tempesta impietosa,  
come potranno teste senza tetto e lombi affamati,  
cenci pieni di squarci e di finestre,  
difendervi da tempi come questi? Ah, troppo poco  
me ne sono curato! Pompa regale, ecco la tua medicina!  
Rimani allo scoperto a sentire quel che sentono i poveri,  
per scuoterti di dosso il superfluo e darlo a loro  
mostrando che il cielo è più giusto.

V, 3, 8-19

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison;  
We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage:  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down;  
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
And take upon's the mystery of things,  
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones  
That ebb and flow by th'moon.

No, no, no, no; vieni, andiamo in prigione.  
Noi due soli canteremo come uccelli in gabbia;  
quando tu chiederai la mia benedizione, io m'inginocchierò  
per chiederti perdono; e vivremo così, e pregando, e cantando  
e raccontandoci antiche favole, e ridendo  
delle farfalle variopinte; e sentiremo quei poveri furfanti  
parlare della corte; e si discorrerà con loro,  
di chi perde e chi vince, di chi è dentro e chi è fuori  
e assumeremo su di noi il mistero delle cose  
come se fossimo spie di Dio; e fra le mura di una prigione  
vedremo consumarsi branchi e conventicole di potenti,  
come alte e basse maree sotto la luna.

6. *Il racconto d'inverno (The Winter's Tale)*

V, 3. A chapel in PAULINA'S house.

Enter LEONTES, POLIXENES, FLORIZEL, PERDITA, CAMILLO, PAULINA, Lords, and Attendants

LEONTES

O grave and good Paulina, the great comfort  
That I have had of thee!

PAULINA

What, sovereign sir,  
I did not well I meant well. All my services  
You have paid home: but that you have vouchsafed,  
With your crown'd brother and these your contracted  
Heirs of your kingdoms, my poor house to visit,  
It is a surplus of your grace, which never  
My life may last to answer.

LEONTES

O Paulina,  
We honour you with trouble: but we came  
To see the statue of our queen: your gallery  
Have we pass'd through, not without much content  
In many singularities; but we saw not  
That which my daughter came to look upon,  
The statue of her mother.

PAULINA

As she lived peerless,  
So her dead likeness, I do well believe,  
Excels whatever yet you look'd upon  
Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it  
Lonely, apart. But here it is: prepare  
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever  
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well.

PAULINA draws a curtain, and discovers HERMIONE standing like a statue

I like your silence, it the more shows off  
Your wonder: but yet speak; first, you, my liege,  
Comes it not something near?

LEONTES

Her natural posture!  
Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed  
Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she  
In thy not chiding, for she was as tender  
As infancy and grace. But yet, Paulina,  
Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing  
So aged as this seems.

POLIXENES

O, not by much.

PAULINA

So much the more our carver's excellence;  
Which lets go by some sixteen years and makes her  
As she lived now.

LEONTES

As now she might have done,  
So much to my good comfort, as it is  
Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,  
Even with such life of majesty, warm life,  
As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her!  
I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me  
For being more stone than it? O royal piece,  
There's magic in thy majesty, which has  
My evils conjured to remembrance and  
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,  
Standing like stone with thee.

PERDITA

And give me leave,  
And do not say 'tis superstition, that  
I kneel and then implore her blessing. Lady,  
Dear queen, that ended when I but began,  
Give me that hand of yours to kiss.

PAULINA

O, patience!  
The statue is but newly fix'd, the colour's Not dry.

CAMILLO

My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,  
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,  
So many summers dry; scarce any joy  
Did ever so long live; no sorrow  
But kill'd itself much sooner.

POLIXENES

Dear my brother,  
Let him that was the cause of this have power  
To take off so much grief from you as he  
Will piece up in himself.

PAULINA

Indeed, my lord,  
If I had thought the sight of my poor image  
Would thus have wrought you,--for the stone is mine--  
I'd not have show'd it.

LEONTES

Do not draw the curtain.

PAULINA

No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy  
May think anon it moves.

LEONTES

Let be, let be.  
Would I were dead, but that, methinks, already--  
What was he that did make it? See, my lord,  
Would you not deem it breathed? and that those veins  
Did verily bear blood?

POLIXENES

Masterly done!  
The very life seems warm upon her lip.

LEONTES

The fixture of her eye has motion in't,  
As we are mock'd with art.

PAULINA

I'll draw the curtain.  
My lord's almost so far transported that  
He'll think anon it lives.

LEONTES

O sweet Paulina,  
Make me to think so twenty years together!  
No settled senses of the world can match  
The pleasure of that madness. Let't alone.

PAULINA

I am sorry, sir, I have thus far stirr'd you; but  
I could afflict you farther.

LEONTES

Do, Paulina;  
For this affliction has a taste as sweet  
As any cordial comfort. Still, methinks,  
There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel  
Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me,  
For I will kiss her.

PAULINA

Good my lord, forbear.  
The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;  
You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own  
With oily painting. Shall I draw the curtain?

LEONTES

No, not these twenty years.

PERDITA

So long could I  
Stand by, a looker-on.

PAULINA

Either forbear,  
Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you  
For more amazement. If you can behold it,  
I'll make the statue move indeed, descend  
And take you by the hand; but then you'll think--  
Which I protest against--I am assisted  
By wicked powers.

LEONTES

What you can make her do,  
I am content to look on; what to speak,  
I am content to hear; for 'tis as easy  
To make her speak as move.

PAULINA

It is required  
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;  
On: those that think it is unlawful business  
I am about, let them depart.

LEONTES

Proceed:  
No foot shall stir.

PAULINA

Music, awake her; strike!

[*Music*]

Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;  
Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,  
I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away,  
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him  
Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs.

[*HERMIONE comes down from the pedestal*]

Start not; her actions shall be holy as  
You hear my spell is lawful. Do not shun her  
Until you see her die again; for then  
You kill her double. Nay, present your hand:  
When she was young you woo'd her; now in age  
Is she become the suitor?

LEONTES

O, she's warm!

If this be magic, let it be an art  
Lawful as eating.

POLIXENES

She embraces him.

CAMILLO

She hangs about his neck.  
If she pertain to life let her speak too.

POLIXENES

Ay, and make't manifest where she has lived,  
Or how stolen from the dead.

PAULINA

That she is living,  
Were it but told you, should be hooted at  
Like an old tale: but it appears she lives,  
Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while.  
Please you to interpose, fair madam: kneel  
And pray your mother's blessing. Turn, good lady;  
Our Perdita is found.

HERMIONE

    You gods, look down  
And from your sacred vials pour your graces  
Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own.  
Where hast thou been preserved? where lived? how found  
Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,  
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle  
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved  
Myself to see the issue.

PAULINA

    There's time enough for that;  
Lest they desire upon this push to trouble  
Your joys with like relation. Go together,  
You precious winners all; your exultation  
Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,  
Will wing me to some wither'd bough and there  
My mate, that's never to be found again,  
Lament till I am lost.

LEONTES

    O, peace, Paulina!  
Thou shouldst a husband take by my consent,  
As I by thine a wife: this is a match,  
And made between's by vows. Thou hast found mine;  
But how, is to be question'd; for I saw her,  
As I thought, dead, and have in vain said many  
A prayer upon her grave. I'll not seek far--  
For him, I partly know his mind--to find thee  
An honourable husband. Come, Camillo,  
And take her by the hand, whose worth and honesty  
Is richly noted and here justified  
By us, a pair of kings. Let's from this place.  
What! look upon my brother: both your pardons,  
That e'er I put between your holy looks  
My ill suspicion. This is your son-in-law,  
And son unto the king, who, heavens directing,  
Is troth-plight to your daughter. Good Paulina,  
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely  
Each one demand an answer to his part  
Perform'd in this wide gap of time since first  
We were dissever'd. Hastily lead away.

[*Exeunt*]