SHAKESPEARE'S VENICE

Shakespeare's many accurate allusions to Venice are generally accounted for as a manifestation of the intuitive knowledge peculiar to a poetic mind, which, without possessing more than meagre indications about a subject, can yet reconstruct an imaginative picture corresponding faithfully to reality. Certain commentators suggest that Giovanni Florio, or other Italians resident in London, supplied him with detailed information about Italy. Very rarely is the theory countenanced that he may have been one of the numerous travellers of the Elizabethan age who visited Italy.

However that may be, the astonishing fact remains: Shakespeare knew Venice better and more minutely than some of his critics have done, or how otherwise could the 'Sagittary' of Othello have remained so long unidentified? It can, I think, be shown that the 'Sagittary' did actually exist, and does actually exist, and can still be seen in Venice to-day.

It is generally interpreted as the name of an inn. In the accounts left by Renaissance travellers, in the itineraries of pilgrims, whose normal route to Palestine was by land as far as Venice, there are abundant records of inns in all quarters of the town. Frequent mention is made of the Albergo Tedesco, the Leone Bianco, and the Cavalletto, kept by Dutchmen or Germans, and visited by their compatriots. There was the Serpa or Cerva, preferred by ambassadors and diplomats, and the Luna and the Selvaadego frequented by Frenchmen. There were less pretentious inns near Rialto: the Specchio, the Campana, the Bo, the Torre, and the Cicogna; while the very signpost of the Storione has come down to us, reproduced by Carpaccio in his Patriarca di Grado. Many more are known, but an inn called the 'Sagittary' has left no trace.

Theodor Elze, writing in Venice in 1878, came to the conclusion that it was an imaginary name devised by Shakespeare, and found a certain appropriateness in the choice of such an inn as the dwelling of a soldier. But the 'Sagittary' was no inn.

Charles Knight declared it to be 'the residence at the Arsenal of the commanding officers of the navy and army of the republic. The figure of an archer with his drawn bow, still indicates the place.' It is true that the figure of an archer, bow in hand, still stands, together with seven other

1 Act 1, sc. i, 159; Act 1, sc. iii, 115.
2 E. Zaniboni, Alberghi Italiani e Viaggiatori Stranieri, 1921.
3 Theodor Elze, Italienische Skizzen zu Shakespeare.
statues, at the entrance to the Arsenal, but Knight's statement has no other foundation of fact.

The gateway of the Arsenal dates from 1460, and the winged lion and the statue representing Saint Giustina were placed above it to commemorate the naval victory of Lepanto in 1571. But it was not until 1682 that the stone balustrade enclosing the platform was constructed before the gateway. The eight figures stand on this balustrade. On the right is Neptune holding his trident, on the left is Mars, depicted as an archer, bow in hand, both statues being the signed work of Giovanni Comino, whose chief sculpture was executed between 1673 and 1692. The statue of the archer, Mars, did not exist in Shakespeare's time, and therefore no part of the Arsenal can possibly have derived its name from it in that period.

Moreover Knight's statement that the 'Sagittary' was the residence of the principal officers of the army and navy of the republic is incorrect. The principal officers of the Arsenal, three in number, were certainly compelled to reside within the Arsenal itself. A decree to this effect was enforced in 1442, and the three *Patroni all' Arsenale* were obliged to comply until 1486, when a modification was made. These officers lived in certain houses set apart for them, known as the *palazzi del Paradiso*, *del Purgatorio*, and *dell' Inferno*. Such names are said to have originated from the fact that one was well exposed to the sun, whereas the other two were in proportionate degree cold, damp and cheerless.

Othello was not one of the *Patroni all' Arsenale*, so that his dwelling would not necessarily be in or near the Arsenal. Even if it were situated in the neighbourhood, the text shows clearly that, in the opening scenes which introduce the 'Sagittary,' he was not in his usual dwelling.

> You have been hotly called for,  
> When being not at your lodging to be found,  
> The Senate hath sent about three several quests,  
> To search you out.  

(Act 1, sc. ii, 44.)

The 'Sagittary,' in fact, had no connexion whatsoever with the Arsenal.

In Act 1, scene i, 159, Iago bids Roderigo:

> Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,  
> And there will I be with him.

The implication is undeniable that the scene, in which Roderigo leading the search party comes upon Iago and Othello, will be set in the 'Sagittary' itself.

That scene takes place in the street outside the house to which Othello

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has taken Desdemona: for Othello, on receiving the urgent summons from the Senate, replies (Act i, sc. ii, 48):

I will but spend a word here in the house,
And go with you.

The 'Sagittary,' then, is a street in Venice: and when Othello urges the Duke:

Send for the lady to the Sagittary,

and to Iago adds the command (Act i, sc. iii, 121):

Ancient, conduct them:
You best know the place,

he is bidding Iago conduct them to the particular house in the 'Sagittary' where Desdemona is to be found. They would all know the street, but Iago's mission is to lead them to the precise house which he alone knows.

Nor is this identification of the 'Sagittary' with a street in Venice mere conjecture. Records show that the street existed in the thirteenth century. Marin Sanuto noted in his diary that a fire broke out there during the night of July 12, 1518, causing great damage. The street was a busy thoroughfare in Shakespeare's time, and Giacomo Franco, the celebrated engraver, had his shop there at the sign of the Sun. In this street Byron lodged when he first visited Venice in November, 1816, and here he fell in love with the wife of his landlord, Marianna Segati. The street is still to be seen in Venice, and the thought is pleasant that it will still exist so long as the city stands.

For the 'Sagittary' is one of the most characteristic calli of Venice. It is none other than the Frezzaria, a narrow dark street which runs from the Salizzada San Moïse just off Piazza San Marco, takes a right-angle turn, and ends on the Ponte dei Barcaroli near Campo San Fantino. The Frezzaria was so called because the makers of arrows had their shops there. In 1271 the guild of smiths was divided up into distinct and specialised groups, arrow-makers, armourers, sword-makers, cutlers, makers of scabbards and smiths proper, and their workshops gave their names to various streets in the city. Such nomenclature was common in Venice. Hence Spadaria, Merceria, Cordaria and Casselaria which still exist today.

Shakespeare's manner of adopting the name of the street is of peculiar interest. Florio translates 'Frezzaria or Frecciaria' as 'a place where shafts or arrows are made, kept or sold,' but he makes no reference to the street of that name in Venice.

It must be clearly understood that the 'Sagittary' of Othello is in no way connected with the zodiacal constellation Sagittarius: nor with the
Centaur, the Sagittary referred to in Troilus and Cressida. It is not the same word at all, but an entirely new word, coined by Shakespeare; concocted, moreover, with singular penetration into the formation of Venetian street names. Sagittary was formed by analogy with Frezzaria. The two words are identical in construction and meaning. In Shakespeare’s time the word arrow could be expressed in two ways in Italian. One is frezza, the other is sagitta. Add the suffix aria to the first, and Frezzaria results. Add the suffix ary to the second and Sagittary results. It is hardly necessary to point out that the suffix ary is the English equivalent of the Italian aria, and that ‘library’ is the counterpart of the Italian librarìa or librerìa. The resultant form Sagittary is a perfect counterpart in construction and meaning of Frezzaria. Of necessity it has undergone a transformation. For the word of Germanic origin, frezza, Shakespeare substituted the word of Latin derivation, sagitta. That substitution is easily explained. It was rendered necessary by the fact that ‘Frezzary’ would convey nothing to an English mind, while ‘Sagittary’ has at least the advantage of being founded on a word of Latin origin familiar to English ears. It is true that Shakespeare would have the authority of Marco Antonio Sabellico for his Latinised adaptation of the name, for in the De Situ Urbis Venetae this very street is spoken of as the vicus sagittarius:

Campus a fronte ad Gregorii traccutum excurrit: secus Jubanicae tecta per inflectos calles ad Angelum laeva, dextra ad Fantini itur aram...Duplici inde via in Divi Marci itur aream, laeva per sagittarium vicum, dextera pontibus duobus. In ulterioris conspectu, Mosis fanum cum acclivi turre.

But it is obvious that Sabellico did not supply the version ‘Sagittary,’ for in his hands the name loses all its charm, and becomes a street like any other, in any town, an undistinguished ‘Archer Street.’ Shakespeare’s handling of the name preserves all its Venetian character, and is a fitting counterpart of the reality, suggesting to those who know Venice that narrow romantic street, the atmosphere and very essence of the place.

When the ‘Sagittary’ is correctly interpreted, the first act of Othello bears still more truly the stamp of Venice.

No more grimly fitting street than the Frezzaria to welcome Desdemona after her flight with the Moor; no more darkly suitable setting in all Venice for the double-edged talk of Iago with Othello, for the hasty arrival of the torch-led messengers sent by the Senate, and for the bursting

1 Frezza is the Venetian counterpart of the Italian freccia. Sagitta is the literary form of saetta.

2 Marco Antonio Coccio Sabellico da Vicovaro wrote his history of Venice in 1487. The above extract from the De Situ Urbis is quoted from the 1560 edition. Opera Omnia, Basilea, iv, p. 208.
in of the angry father's search party tracking down his daughter. If Shakespeare never set foot in Venice, it is remarkable that he went to such lengths to produce a convincing and detailed picture of the city. For it is undeniable that, where Venice is concerned, he did trouble to paint in minute details, contrary to his usual custom. Othello is a striking instance. Giraldi Cinthio, in his version of the tale, supplies no details whatsoever of the town: yet the scenes of the play set in Venice are packed with local colour. Cyprus in comparison is a bare rock, with nothing to distinguish it from any other island. The simplest and most satisfactory explanation is that Shakespeare followed the normal process of drawing upon his own direct knowledge of the city to complete the picture.

Venice is the setting of yet another play, and, just as the Shakespearean Othello supplies accurate details not to be found in Giraldi Cinthio's tale, so too the Merchant of Venice presents a far more vivid and detailed picture of the city, and the region round the lagoon, than can be found in Ser Giovanni's Pecorone. The Merchant of Venice is perhaps of all the plays the one which most faithfully conjures up the life and soul of an Italian city. Such a story could have unfolded in no other town. Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock and Portia could only move against the fair background of the Most Serene Republic.

There is more than historical accuracy in this story of Venetian life. There is accurate reproduction of the very bustle of the city, of life in all its aspects. Under Shakespeare's pen, Venice the great state, small in territory, mighty in spirit and in compass, rears herself up and dominates the play. Shakespeare reconstructs the grave merchant life thronging the Rialto: the Jew rubbing shoulders with the worthy magnates. He brings to life the gaiety of narrow streets in the city of carnival, crowded by night with masquers with varnished faces, romping and merry-making. He wakens with his pen the Venice of the Ducal Palace, and shows the powerful machinery of Venetian law in all its inviolable grandeur. The doge himself appears, and in his mighty presence the climax is reached. Venice herself is the protagonist.

Yet more than this. Shakespeare knew equally well Venetian country life. Belmont calls to mind the palace of Caterina Cornaro at Asolo, or one of the country residences which lined the banks of the river Brenta. Coryat speaks of them: 'When I passed down the river to Venice, I saw many goodly faire houses and palaces of pleasure on both sides of the River Brenta, which belong to the gentlemen of Venice.' They were indeed worthy of mention, some, such as the Malcontenta, having been designed by Andrea Palladio.
Ser Giovanni Fiorentino sketched the bare outline of a tale, but failed to blend the diverse elements into one complete whole. He gives no details whatsoever of Venice. Shakespeare departs from his crude original only to build up a perfect picture of Venetian life. As the skeleton to the living man, so is Ser Giovanni’s tale to The Merchant of Venice. Portia puts to shame the Lady of Belmonte as Bassanio does Giannetto, as Antonio outshines Ansaldo. From a mere hint of feeble shadows, there have sprung up living creatures full of subtlety and force. From a mere hint of a lifeless region there is portrayed a powerful, true and vivid Venice. Such skill in delineation and vivification is astounding in its accuracy. Here, as always, Shakespeare shows his supreme power of remoulding and amplifying material ready to his hand. Some facts could be obtained by hearsay. Anyone might know of the Venetian galleys trading in all parts of the world, in Tripolis, Mexico, Barbary, Lisbon, England and India. The lively trade with Frankfurt might well be a subject of discussion in England. But, in all his allusions to Belmont, he appears to be writing with perfect knowledge of the district between Venice and Padua.

Above all, there is the striking passage in which Portia entrusts Balthasar with a message:

Take this same letter,
And use thou all the endeavour of a man,
In speed to Padua, see thou render this
Into my cousin’s hand, Doctor Bellario,
And look what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagin’d speed
Unto the Tranect, to the common Ferrie
Which trades to Venice; waste no time in words,
But get thee gone, I shall be there before thee.

(Act iii, sc. iv, 49–57.)

This passage gives yet another proof of the remarkably detailed quality of Shakespeare’s knowledge of Venice. The traveller approaching Venice from the mainland could take a ferry to cross the lagoon at three points only: at Mestre, a tiny post-house and village of small importance, a ferry used chiefly by travellers to and from Germany; secondly at Chioggia, a much longer distance from Venice and used chiefly for communication with Central and Southern Italy; lastly at Lizza Fusina, a ferry of far greater importance, for it was on the direct route between Padua and Venice.

The traveller who came from England, France, or Flanders would normally proceed to Milan, and thence through Verona and Padua to Venice, taking the ferry boat at Lizza Fusina. It was even possible to
travel the whole distance between Padua and Venice by boat down the Brenta. Or alternatively the traveller could proceed by coach to Lizza Fusina, there taking the ferry.

The journey by boat from Padua was much recommended for the beauty of the passage. The ferry boat, known as the *Burchiello*, set out from the east gate of Padua, the Porta Portello, proceeded down the Brenta, past the splendid palaces of the Venetian patricians, such as Strà, Mira and the Malcontenta, until it came to Lizza Fusina, the last village on the mainland.

At this point the stream had been diverted by means of a huge dam, constructed in order to prevent the mixing of salt and fresh water and consequent damage to the low-lying land and to the lagoon itself. Large vessels bound for Venice were prevented by the dam from entering the lagoon at this point, and were obliged to follow the course of the stream, entering the canal, Resta d'Algio, and issuing into the lagoon from the unblocked mouth of the Brenta opposite Malamocco. But small vessels, and particularly the *burchiello*, on reaching the dam stopped there and were hauled across it by an ingenious contrivance, and then lowered into the lagoon. Thus the journey was considerably shortened. This contrivance was known as the *carro*.

The 'common ferry' has been identified by some commentators with the *burchiello* at its starting-point at Padua, and Fynes Moryson has been quoted in testimony. But it must be remembered that Portia is in a great hurry to reach Venice. Bassanio has left in greatest haste to arrive in Venice with the least possible delay. In the last act, Portia assures Bassanio:

> Lorenzo here
> Shall witness I set forth as soon as you. (Act v, sc. i, 270.)

She is naturally doing as Bassanio did, taking the speediest and most direct route to Venice. The *burchiello* was the most pleasant mode of conveyance from Padua to Venice, but not by any means the swiftest. So slow was the journey by this boat that it gave rise to a popular saying to indicate slowness: 'andar co la coriera e col burchiello.' Coryat left Padua by boat at seven in the morning and reached Venice at two in the afternoon, a journey of seven hours. Coronelli in his *Viaggi* notes that from Fusina to Padua, a distance of twenty miles, by coach takes four hours. From Venice to Fusina is only five miles, so that in case of urgency the whole distance could be covered in little more than five hours.

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1. V. Coronelli, *Viaggi*, Venezia, 1697, i, p. 86.
It is inconceivable that Portia would go to Padua to take the boat down the Brenta, when a good highway ran alongside the stream, and her coach, which she declares is already waiting at the park gates, would take her right down to Lizza Fusina far more quickly. At Lizza Fusina, of necessity she must take the boat to cross the lagoon.

This argument holds wherever Belmont is situated. Certainly there is no justification for the supposition that, because of the similarity of names, Belmont is identical with the village of Montebello near Vicenza, for Shakespeare would find the word in his original, Ser Giovanni’s tale, where it appears as Belmonte. On the contrary, most indications point to Belmont being situated somewhere on the bank of the river Brenta, which was navigable even by large vessels, though the journey would be longer than for a small boat which could cross the dam at Lizza Fusina by the carro. Thus Bassanio, who sets out by ship from Venice, could well arrive at the gates of Belmont in his vessel.

Moreover, if Portia’s words are to be taken literally, and there seems every inducement to do so, Belmont is twenty miles from Venice (Act III, sc. iv, 84):

For we must measure twenty miles to-day.

Allowing for the five miles across the lagoon, this would place Belmont at a distance of fifteen miles from Lizza Fusina, and consequently five miles from Padua, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Strà. Such a situation accounts for Portia’s instructions to her servant. For Balthasar has then to ride the five miles from Belmont to Padua, obtain the notes and garments from Bellario, and then cover the twenty miles from Padua to Lizza Fusina, where he will find Portia already waiting. Hence her command:

And use thou all the endeavour of a man,
    In speed to Padua...
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagin’d speed....

Portia, on the other hand, has only fifteen miles to cover to reach Lizza Fusina, as against Balthasar’s twenty-five, so that she could speak with certainty; ‘I shall be there before thee.’ The common ferry, then, would seem to be the boat which left from Lizza Fusina to cross the lagoon to Venice.

The word tranect is still an unsolved problem. It may really have existed, derived from tranare or trainare, to drag or to draw, as Capell, Malone, Knight and Cowden-Clarke surmise. The passage then might contain direct reference to the carro which worked by a system of haulage. But so far no such word as tranect has come to light, either in English, or in a
corresponding Italian form, and in all probability there has been a corruption of some kind.

The emendation to *traject* is most generally accepted. A similar word, *traquet* corresponding to the Italian *traghetto*, was used by a French traveller of this time to indicate not only the ferry, but also the crossing of the dam. This Seigneur de Villamont, whose *Voyages* bear the date 1598, speaks of the ferries in Venice as 'treize autres lieux qu’ils nomment Traquets, où les gondoles ne manquent point pour passer d’un lieu en l’autre.' Later he relates how he left the town:

for m’embarquer en l’une des barques qui vont chacun jour de Venise à Padoué. Lesquelles sont toutes couvertes et fort commodes, ne costent pour chacune personne que seize sols venitiens, qui sont six sols des nostres, où il y a vingt cinq mille. Ausdites barques se trouvent ordinairement diverses nations, où il convient à plusieurs de se montrer modestes en leur parler de peur de tomber en quelque accident, pour que la plus part de ceux qui vont et viennent, sont tous couverts de jaceque de maille et prompts à poignarder. Ainsi navigant cinq mille de mer, parvinnmes au traquet de Liza fusina, qui est à l’embocheure de la mer, et de la rivière de Brente, lequel traquet ressemble à une très grande chaussée qui sépare la mer d’avec la rivière, toutefois le lieu par où l’on monte les barques est composé de bois, sur lequel par certains engins qu’un cheval faict tourner, les barques sont enlevées en un moment de la mer en la rivière. La raison pourquoi ce traquet a esté basty, ç’a esté pour conserver et empecher la mixtion de l’eau douce avec la salee, parce que de Liza fusina on la porte iusques à Venise.... De Liza fusina on peut aller si on veut par carrosse à Padoué. Toutefois le cours de l’eau est plus plaisant à cause des beaux palais qui sont edifiez à ses rives.

The word *traquet* is used here equally for the *traghetto* or ferries in Venice and for the dam at Lizza Fusina. This remote and tiny village is recorded by travellers solely on account of the dam and the ingenious contrivance for transferring boats from canal to lagoon. But so remarkable did they find it that hardly one omits to make mention of it in describing the approach to Venice. And since the natural route for travellers coming from France, England and Flanders was through Padua, of necessity many passed over the *carro*.

Marin Sanuto records in his *Itinerario per la Terraferma* how, on the 15th April, 1483, he left Venice and came to ‘Liza Fusina... et qui e uno caro va di qua di la, mirabelle ingegno, et passano le barche ne se pol vegnar per altra via licet ne sia una altra qui dicta Resta di Algio, et è longissima;...et di qui a Padoa è mia 20.’

A century later another famous man passed twice over the *carro*. Montaigne’s *Journal de Voyage* records how in 1580 they came to:

**La Chaffousine vingt milles, où nous disnames. Ce n’est qu’une hostellerie, où l’on se met sur l’eau pour se rendre à Venise. Là abordent tous les bateaux le long de cette riviere. Avec des engins et des polies, que deux chevaux tournent à la mode de ceux**

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qui tournent les meules d’huile, on emporte ces barques à tout des roues qu’on leur met au dessous, par dessus un planchier de bois pour les mettre dans le canal qui se va rendre en la mer, où Venise est assise. Nous y disnmes, et nous estans mis dans une gondole, vinsmes souper à Venise, cinq milles.

When he left Venice, he travelled by boat towed by horses up stream to Padua.

Fynes Moryson has left an even more detailed account.

In the spring of the yeere, 1594, . . . I began my journey to see Italy, and taking boat at the East gate of Padua, the same was drawne by horses along the River Brenta; and having shot two or three small bridges, and passed twenty miles, we came to the Village Lizzafusina, where there is a damme to stop the waters of Brenta, lest in processe of time, the passage be open, the Marshes on that side of Venice should be filled with sand or earth, and so a passage be made on firme ground to the City; which they are carefull to prevent, and not without just cause, having found safety in their Iles, when Italy was often overflowed by barbarous people. Besides, they say that this damme was made, lest this fresh-water should bee mingled with their salt waters; since all the Gentlemen of Venice fetch their fresh water by boats from thence, the poorer sort being content with Well water. Heere whiles our boat was drawne by an Instrument, out of the River Brenta, into the Marshes of Venice, wee the passengers refreshed ourselves with meat and wine, and according to the custome agreed upon the price of our meat before wee did eat it. Then we entred our boat againe, and passed five miles to Venice, upon the marshes thereof: and each man paied for his passage a lire, or twenty sols, and for a horse more than ordinary, that we might be drawne more swiftly from Paduoa to Lizzafusina, each man paied foure sols, but the ordinary passage is only sixteene sols. We might have had coaches, but since a boat passeth daily too and fro betweene these Cities, most men use this passage as most convenient. For the boat is covered with arched hatches, and there is very pleasant company, so a man beware to give no offence: for otherwise the Lumbards carry shirts of Male, and being armed as if they were in a Camp, are apt to revenge upon shamefull advantages. But commonly there is pleasant discourse, and the proverb saith, that the boat shall bee drowned, when it carries neither Monke, nor Student, nor Curtesan (they love them too well to call them whores) the passengers being for the most part of these kindes.

Coryat also, travelling to Venice not many years later, records the pleasant journey down the river Brenta, and adds:

When I came to the aforesaid Lucie Fesina, I saw Venice, and not before, which yeeld-eth the most glorious and heavenly shew upon the water that ever any mortal eye beheld, such a shew as did even ravish me both with delight and admiration. This Lucie Fesina is at the uttermost point and edge of the lande, being five miles on this side Venice. There the fresh and salt water would meete and be confounded together, were it not kept asunder by a sluice that is made for the same purpose, over which sluice the Barkes that go forth and backe betwixt Padua and Venice are lifted up by a certain crane. At this Lucie Fesina I went out of my barke, and tooke a Gondola which brought me to Venice.

The anonymous author of the Itinerarium Italiae Totius, published in 1602, speaks of Lizza Fusina and the remarkable contrivance: ‘Hic pulchro artificio navigatur non mari, sed terra.’ In the Hercules Prodictius it is spoken of as a Machina Traductrix, and it is alluded to in much the same terms by Andrea Scotto and Paul Hentzner in their Itineraries.

1 Hercules Prodictius, seu Principia Juventutis vita et Peregrinatio, per Stephanum Vinandum Pighium Campensem, Antwerp, 1587.
Later writers, however, have left still more detailed descriptions of the ingeniously built carro. Coronelli explains its construction. It consisted of two slipways built of wood and stone, two slopes down which sleds made of wood ran on a track into the water. The boat approached the foot of the slope, and the sled was fixed beneath it. The sled with the boat upon it was hauled to the top by means of ropes and pulleys suspended from a beam. The sled then ran down the corresponding slope on the other side; the boat was unfixed and proceeded on its way. There were two of these sleds, working side by side, one for the boats coming from Venice, one for those coming from Padua, the difference lying in the placing of the beams and consequent adjustment of haulage power. This carro was still in use in Shakespeare's time, for it was not finally done away with until 1614 or 1615, when it was supplanted by a system of locks. In the State Archives in Venice there are preserved documents relating to the Pesaro family, known as Pesaro del Carro, because of their ownership of the carro. They in 1514 had been granted the right of keeping the inn at Lizza Fusina, together with the toll for the crossing of the dam by the carro, and certain apparatus for the cleansing of wool. In 1612 the Pesaro family made an appeal to the Republic for compensation for loss of income owing to the disuse of the carro, a double loss, because not only were the tolls for passage no longer forthcoming, but the inn was no longer frequented. They were awarded as indemnity the annual sum of 281 ducats, to be paid 'dal giorno che le barche comincerano a transitare per altro luogo che per il carro.'

It is noticeable that the word used for the crossing of the carro is transit, and in the official documents relating to Lizza Fusina the word transit constantly recurs. On March 28, 1444, the transit of Lizza Fusina was awarded to a certain Giacomo Barbusa, and again in November, 1455, the transit, together with the toll, was conceded to a certain Maestro Antonio Maria de Franzon Ingegneri. In 1469 and in 1479 mention is made of the transito di Lizafusina and in later years, for instance in 1485 and in 1489, there are records of the ‘incanto del transito del canal di Lizafusina,’ so also in the year 1500. Moreover, these documents all bear as heading the words ‘transit of Lizza Fusina.’

It is just possible that the true reading of tranect may be trancet for transit. Old forms of the word exist, such as trancyte. The letter C is freely interchanged with S in Elizabethan writings, for example recide for transit as a passage over.

reside, in Othello, or ceaze, falsce and sence in Shakespeare's Sonnets. 
Trancet for transit would be no more abnormal than lawnset for lancet. 
Such a reading might satisfy those commentators who reject the emendation to traject and believe that the passage contains some reference to the carro.

Though the word tranect must still be regarded as an unsolved problem, 
there seems to be no doubt whatsoever that the reference to the common ferry concerns the ferry at Lizza Fusina, and one fact stands out clearly. 
Shakespeare, by his very allusion to the common ferry, falls into one particular group, namely the group of travellers to Venice, for it is only amongst records left by travellers to Venice that any mention of the ferry at that remote village is found.

It is a far cry from Stratford meadows, from London river and London town, to Venice and the lagoon. Can such accurate allusions to the 'Sagittary,' to the 'common ferry,' together with the vivid detailed picture of Venice, be solely the fruit of intuitive knowledge? Or did Shakespeare speak advisedly and with full experience when, in Love's Labour's Lost, he quoted the travellers who say of Venice,

Venetia, Venetia,
Chi non ti vede, non ti pretia?

VIOLET M. JEFFERY.