

FIVE LECTURES ON SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES
Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest

President's College, University of Hartford

Humphrey Tonkin
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PREFACE

This is still a work in progress. I have taught these plays many times in many combinations, and the following remarks are something of a distillation, or perhaps merely an abridgment, of years of sometimes convoluted thinking. I plan to keep working at it until I get it right.

Written out after the fact, on the basis of lecture notes, these five texts are necessarily uneven in their attribution of ideas to sources (probably wrong sometimes, deficient on other occasions). In this regard, and also most emphatically on the substance of my arguments, I would welcome comments and suggestions.

H.T.

LECTURE ONE

PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was probably first seen on the stage in about 1606, a couple of years before *Pericles* and about the same time as *Macbeth* was first performed. *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth* look in different directions. *Macbeth*, a tightly crafted and claustrophobic study of the ascent and decline of a man gripped by ambition, has much in common with the slightly earlier *Othello*, and with *Hamlet*. *Antony and Cleopatra*, though a dramatization of a piece of Roman history (its source is Plutarch's "Life of Mark Antony" as translated by Sir Thomas North in 1579) and therefore looking back to *Julius Caesar* and on to *Coriolanus*, covers a vast geographical area, seeming to embrace the Roman Empire from its center to its exotic periphery. It is a love story, a kind of *Romeo and Juliet* of the mature set: indeed, when seen through the prism of this early tragedy, from ten years before, the final scenes of *Antony and Cleopatra* take on a particular poignancy. In a way, the two plays form bookends to the tragedies, only *Titus Andronicus* and perhaps *Richard III* lying beyond their reach at the beginning, and *Coriolanus* at the end..

But the vast canvas on which the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra is presented, along with the incident-packed nature of this presentation, gives the play something of the characteristics of romance. The kinship between this play and *Pericles*, a play also involving zigzags across the Mediterranean almost as bewildering as the *Odyssey* itself, is greater than it might at first sight appear. *Pericles* also looks back to a play at the very beginning of Shakespeare's career, *The Comedy of Errors*, likewise set in the Mediterranean and involving sea-voyages.

Perhaps no other play in the canon (where it sits uneasily: more on this in a moment) has quite so many changes of geographical location, with quite such an array of characters, as *Pericles*. In the course of the play we move around among the following:

- Antioch and King Antiochus (Act 1)
- Tyre, home of Pericles (1, 2)
- Tharsus, home of Cleon and Dionyza, where Marina grows up (1, 3, 4)
- Pentapolis, home of King Simonides and Thaisa (2)
- Ephesus, home of Cerimon, where Thaisa becomes a priestess (3, 5)
- Mytilene, home of Lysimachus, where Pericles finds Marina (4, 5)

These many locations, scattered across the eastern Mediterranean, are linked by perilous voyages, including:

- A shipwreck between Acts 1 and 2,
- Marina's birth and Thaisa's "burial" at sea at the beginning of Act 3.

The geographical breadth is matched by an equally vast chronology: fourteen years separate Acts 3 and 4, and in effect we witness the fortunes of two generations. More: the younger generation, born in the first half of the play, becomes the means of salvation of the older generation in the second half of the play. In this, the play particularly resembles *The Winter's Tale*.

So this is a play that is structured around disparate and widely scattered events strung out over a long period of time.

If geography is attenuated and time is extended, we also move into the play through a series of fictional layers. This is, if I can use such a term, a highly fictionalized play. We move into the action through the figure of John Gower, contemporary of Chaucer, who, as it were, returns from the dead to present us with a dramatic rendering of one of his stories. The poet of *Confessio Amantis*, a narrative poem that was extremely popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as in its own day, comes back to us at various points in the action. The story of Pericles is in fact drawn from the *Confessio*, where it appears as a retelling of the ancient story known as "Apollonius of Tyre."

Gower's appearance on the stage at the beginning of the play and at intervals thereafter serves to frame the play and stress its character as a dramatized fiction. The technique is reminiscent of *Henry V* or *Romeo and Juliet*. In a sense the dramatized action grows out of a non-dramatic narration. This creation of distance between ourselves and the play's fiction helps make the rather sketchy and disjointed nature of the play, and the improbability of much of its action, believable and acceptable. This is, in short, a highly formulaic play. The formulaic quality is reinforced by such devices as the dumb shows at intervals through the play, an old technique already passé in the 1590s, used, you will recall, by the players in *Hamlet*. The authors of *Pericles* (I use the plural advisedly) are at pains to give this story a kind of antique patina: it is an exemplary story from the distant English past.

Such distancing chimes with the work of such contemporaries as Spenser, whose stories in *The Faerie Queene* allegedly come from "antique rolls" – from the dim and distant past, much as Gower and his story do. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser is at pains to unite what might be called eclectic pan-European themes and motifs (stories from Ariosto, from the French *chansons de geste*, from classical authors) with native, home-grown elements (the world of the fairies, the rivers of Ireland, and so on), much as the architecture of the period unites classical and Renaissance motifs with echoes of English medieval forms, for example in Robert Smythson's grand houses Wollaton Hall or

Hardwick Hall. Shakespeare adopts this strategy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where thoroughly native English craftsmen mingle with aristocratic Athenians, and echoes of Ovid and Apuleius combine with a rather English-looking fairyland. We pass through an English frame to an Italian story in *The Taming of the Shrew*. *Pericles*, too, is at once English (through Gower) and continental and classical (through setting and Gower's sources).

The story of *Pericles* has as its hero a figure who is remarkably passive: things *happen to* *Pericles*: he is not in control of the action, but the action drives him. One is reminded of a similar sense of powerlessness on the part of such near-contemporary creations as *Macbeth* and, most particularly, *Timon*. *Pericles* is also not a particularly clearly defined character: there is little sense of an inner life here, and certainly little sense of a continuity of characterization. He is, above all, an example of patience in adversity, or rather of patience in an adversity that ultimately deprives him of his wits (*Lear* comes to mind again), and he is a father – perhaps, in a sense, *the* father, just as Marina is *the* daughter, the two of them more representative than well-rounded as characters. But in reality this is a play driven by event, though event carefully iterated and reiterated.

The mood of the play associates it with the formulaic prose romances that were so popular during this period, in which the hero suffers a series of reversals, often involving shipwrecks or attacks by wild creatures, young lovers and harsh fathers, oracles and prophecies, and particularly family members lost or given up for dead, only to live through a happy ending of rediscovery, rebirth, and the discovery of a new harmony (numerous scholars have written on this subject, Kermode particularly suggestively in his edition of *The Tempest*, now superseded, and in his anthology of pastoral poetry – and Scragg 1992). *Lear* has some of this same aura – a play from a time before time, a Cinderella story gone wrong. It is worth pointing out that these narratives were not only ancient and presented as ancient, but also extremely popular in Shakespeare's day. Such formulae of course underlie the dynamics of comedy: we recognize elements of romance in such plays as *As You Like It*, which really parodies these improbable stories, or in the shipwreck of *Twelfth Night*, or in the recognition scene of *The Comedy of Errors*. There is a strong deterministic element in romance: the actions of fortune determine events. But fortune in turn is tempered by an equally powerful force, that of providence, which in effect matches each unfortunate coincidence with a fortunate one. Indeed, one might say that romance presents for us a battle between fortune and providence in which providence ultimately wins.

The basic formulaic elements of romance can be traced back to the stories of late Greek literature. Six such “novels” of the Alexandrian period of Greek literature have survived, the most famous being Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* (others are by Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus, Chariton, Xenophon, and Dio Chrysostom). The Latin writer Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, a story lying behind *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is sometimes included in this category. They were translated and imitated in the Renaissance. Their spirit also underlay many of the stories told by Boccaccio and his successors. The story of Apollonius of Tyre is believed to have its origin in the late Greek romances, though the earliest surviving account is in Latin and dates from the fifth or sixth century A.D.

Gower used a version by the 12th-century chronicler Godfrey of Viterbo. Shakespeare relied heavily on Gower, but also drew on the version in Laurence Twine's *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* (c. 1576), particularly for the Marina story (Hoeniger quotes relevant passages from Twine in his edition of the play). His decision to use Gower as a Chorus may have been inspired by Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter*, in which Barnes uses the Italian historian Guicciardini as a narrator.

Shakespeare's final plays bring the elements of romance to the fore. *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* all deal in their various ways with huge issues of life and death. One might argue that in this sense they hardly differ from the great tragedies, or from earlier plays as well. What is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* about if not the forward movement of youth and generation? The will to live and love overcomes the objections of a father at the beginning of the play, overcomes the constraints of society in the form of the rather constricted court of the Duke of Athens (and the perhaps somewhat unstable relationship between its two protagonists Theseus and Hippolyta), and ultimately is reintegrated and harmonized with those constraints in the final act of the play.

By the same token, *Hamlet*, in a very different way, confronts the problems of dealing with a tangled past in order to free young people up to live their lives. It is another version, from a very different perspective, of the *Romeo and Juliet* story: young people victimized by their elders' inability to lead their lives peacefully and harmoniously.

If *Hamlet* fails to offer any alternative beyond the rather bloodless Fortinbras, *Lear* does go further. There are those who perceive in the final act (and I think I would count myself among them) a hint of redemption: Lear is at peace with himself, and his realization of Cordelia's sacrifice (once again a martyr to the older generation) opens him to the grace that comes with it.¹ An older Shakespeare writes a version of *Romeo and Juliet*: at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* the parents vow to erect a statue of Juliet. In *Lear* Shakespeare in effect rewrites the play from the point of view of Old Montague and Old Capulet, the perpetrators of the sacrifice of youth, much as Lear and Gloucester are unable to recognize virtue in the younger generation, and to shun its vicious elements.

But behind the final acts of *Lear*, as Lear leaves the court behind and enters the storm and as the sun comes out and flowers bloom in its aftermath (flowers with which Lear is fantastically dressed in the fourth act), is a sense of the cyclical pattern of death and rebirth. It is this cyclical pattern that comes to dominate in the final plays. There are hints of it already in *Timon*, but in the four romances it becomes the dominant reading of the effects of time. Allied with it, and also apparent in *Lear*, is an interest in the relationship between art and nature, and in the enduring qualities of art.

¹ A huge and thorny topic. A.C. Bradley 1905 suggests that Lear's discovery of the good transcends the world's evil, a view also held by G. Wilson Knight in his analysis in *The Wheel of Fire* 1949. Jan Kott 1964 famously takes the opposite view, arguing that the play is essentially nihilistic. For a helpful review of the argument of the play, see Mack 1965.

Indeed, one is tempted to conclude that Shakespeare's (voluntary or involuntary) publication of the *Sonnets* in 1609 was of a piece with the concern with time and generation, to say nothing of the interest in art, that is so important in the late plays. I think we are right to see most of the *Sonnets* as products of the mid-1590s, but the themes that they deal with are similar to those of the final plays. In a sense, in the final plays Shakespeare returns to the preoccupations of an earlier stage in his career, but now from a different and arresting viewpoint.

Among the finest of the sonnets are poems of separation, of a longing for reunion – a variant of the theme of exile that goes back to Shakespeare's earliest plays (*The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*), and that comes to the fore not only in *Pericles* but also in *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, and, in its way, in *The Winter's Tale*. How deep this theme runs in Shakespeare! There is hardly a play without it.

I spoke earlier of the "authors" of *Pericles*. There are huge problems with the text. The play was registered in 1608 and a pirated version was brought out by Henry Gosson in 1609 (the year, incidentally, of the first collected edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*). A second edition of *Pericles* appeared in that same year, 1609. Later editions were published in 1611, 1619, 1630, 1635. The play was the only play generally regarded as canonical that was *not* included in the First Folio. In fact it does not appear until the second impression of the Third Folio in 1664.

This obviously raises the question of Shakespeare's authorship. We do not know precisely what criteria Shakespeare's colleagues John Heminge and Henry Condell (members, like Shakespeare, of the company called the King's Men) used for inclusion of plays in the First Folio. We do know that when Henry Gosson pirated the play in 1609 (it was a great success: a second quarto appeared in the same year), he attributed it to Shakespeare. and that this attribution continued with later quartos. Might the play have been excluded from the First Folio because of the overall condition of the text? There is considerable evidence that it is a reported version, perhaps simply too dirty and imprecise to meet Heminge and Condell's criteria.

The text of *Pericles*, unusually, is not divided into acts and scenes. The generally accepted attribution of acts and scenes to the play is a later addition. The play was originally presented with an intermission in the middle, at the point, now between Acts 3 and 4, where we pass over the gap of 14 years. Some critics have discerned in the play a kind of seven-movement structure, each set off by an intervention of Gower, in other words a series of dramatic sequences circling out from the narrative continuity that Gower provides. One theory even links them with the world's seven ages – a notion that works better in the earlier parts than it does in the later ones (see Marshall 1991).

Of course Gosson's attribution of the play to Shakespeare would probably help sell copies. On the other hand, much of the text does have the feel and texture of Shakespeare's writing. It seems likely that we are dealing here with a collaboration.

Perhaps different parts of the play were done by different authors. Perhaps Shakespeare patched up an earlier play by someone else.

Acts 1 and 2, particularly, seem un-Shakespearian: the language lacks the textured feeling, the complexity of meanings and images, that we associate with Shakespeare. These acts have been attributed at various times to Thomas Heywood, George Wilkins (who published a prose story called *Pericles* in 1608, probably based on the play but possibly its source), and John Day.

Putting on plays in Shakespeare's day was a collaborative activity, in which the author of the text was only one among many players. It is possible, indeed likely, that many hands had at least a minor part in many of Shakespeare's plays. In seeking to tease out such questions of authorship, there are of course a couple of assumptions that we must avoid making.

First, we must not assume that every word in every Shakespeare play is by Shakespeare. We know that the production and publication of the plays was an altogether messier process than that. There are several Shakespeare plays in which there are scenes that look un-Shakespearian and plays by other authors in which Shakespeare seems to have had a hand (such as *Two Noble Kinsmen*, which has a strong Shakespearian flavor).

Second, we should not suppose that all bad scenes are by someone else; all good ones are by Shakespeare. That argument is dangerously circular.

However, when all is said and done, I favor the theory that the first two acts are largely, perhaps completely, someone else's work. F.D.Hoeniger and others make a strong case for John Day, who may also have had a hand in *Timon* and who was a frequent collaborator with other playwrights, among them Dekker, Rowley, and possibly Marlowe.

I will, however, in what follows, assume that we have here a single play, with the coherence of a single play, despite its episodic and sprawling structure.

In the first two acts we enter a chivalric world familiar to the readers of old romance. The two acts revolve around two motifs or themes – the so-called Custom of the Castle, and the tournament in which the hero wins lady.

The play begins with a story of incest, of love gone wrong. We come to it by way of Gower (who uses, by the way, the tetrameter couplets that he uses in the *Confessio Amantis*):

If you, born in these latter times,
When wit's more ripe, accept my rimes,
And that to hear an old man sing
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might

Waste it for you, like taper-light. (1.Chorus.11-16)

Thus Gower is given life by the light of a taper, which gradually burns down as the story progresses, much as the reader reads the story, perhaps last thing at night (like, I might add, some Winter's Tale).

The initial scene is an emblematic episode, only tangentially linked to what comes after it. The scene has a certain dance-like character, with music playing in the background, and with Pericles praising Antiochus's daughter (note she is never named) from a distance. Pericles is caught by King Antiochus: if he fails to interpret the riddle he is given, he dies; if he interprets it, he dies anyway. In the first case, he dies because of his ignorance, and in the second he dies because of his knowledge. We should not, by the way, spend too much time wondering why on earth Antiochus would risk so much with such a riddle, which does, after all, reveal his incest: this is a romance, and the normal principles of probability and of cause-and-effect, are only partially operative. Perhaps the collection of severed heads adorning Antiochus's castle is reminder enough of his symbolic nature: this waste-house is a house of love-as-death.

Incest of father and daughter forces the normal progress of generations back on itself. This emblematic episode at the beginning of the play starts a process in which Pericles tries to *unlock* or *unblock* (and so enable) the natural succession of generations, freeing daughter from father. Here, the normal order and succession is turned to poison and decay through incest:

... Where now you're both a father and a son,
 By your uncomely claspings with your child, --
 Which pleasures fits a husband, not a father;
 And she an eater of her mother's flesh,
 By the defiling of her parent's bed;
 And both like serpents are, who though they feed
 On sweetest flowers, yet they poison breed. (1.1.128-34)

"Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds," says Shakespeare in the Sonnets.

Like some prisoner in a knightly castle, where the custom of the castle (turning on a riddle) promises certain death, Pericles is able, providentially, to persuade Antiochus to relent just enough to give him a chance to flee. But what might feature in, say, a French romance as simply a chivalric episode, is here combined with politics: Antiochus is powerful enough to bring death and destruction to Tyre. Back in Tyre, Pericles is torn apart by the experience he has passed through, and concerned that the retribution he will bring on himself will also destroy his kingdom.

The great Antiochus,
 'Gainst whom I am too little to contend,
 Since he's so great can make his will his act,
 Will think me speaking, though I swear to silence;

Nor boots it me to say I honour him,
If he suspect I may dishonour him. (1.2.17-22)

Pursued by Antiochus's appointed assassin Thaliard, Pericles escapes by sea, a kind of Odysseus condemned to wandering, or a Prospero cast adrift, or perhaps like the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, separated from his kingdom out of his very concern for it.

In a way this play is a *Tempest*, with uproar in the elements and miraculous gifts from the sea, along with a natural world that seems better than the humans who occupy it. It picks up on *Lear* and on *Timon*. I might add that it gives us a corrupt father/daughter relationship that is vaguely reminiscent of an incidental event at the beginning of *Timon* and very much reminiscent of the opening of *Lear*. Antiochus's court (like Lear's, or like Prospero's island) has no mother: in *Pericles* and in *The Winter's Tale*, particularly, the revival and rediscovery of the mother is of crucial importance.

We end the act with an introduction to Tharsus, in the grips of a famine, presided over by Cleon and Dionyza. Pericles comes to them bearing grain, saving them from their famine.

We have heard your miseries as far as Tyre,
And seen the desolation of your streets;
Nor come we to add sorrow to your tears,
But to relieve them of their heavy load. (1.4.88-91)

The audience may be pardoned for wondering what this stop in Tharsus has to do with anything, but of course its significance will become apparent later on. Impelled by fear of Antiochus, Pericles takes again to the seas, only to be shipwrecked.

The Pericles we meet at the beginning of Act 2 is a Pericles made poor, reduced to "extremities", but in this sense mortified and purged of the contaminating sin to which he has been exposed by Antiochus ("Wind, rain and thunder, remember, earthly man / Is but a substance that must yield to you; / And I, as fits my nature, do obey you"). Baptized by the ocean, he is ready to be born again. Our three Fishermen, like peasants in a pastoral romance, comment on the action. Says Pericles, appearing to them (in lines, by the way, reminiscent of Egeon's long speech at the opening of *The Comedy of Errors*):

A man whom both the waters and the wind
In that vast tennis-court, hath made the ball
For them to play upon, entreats you pity him... (2.1.59-61)

Unlike Antiochus, these simple fishermen know goodness and happiness: they are unspoiled. Untutored in the ways of court and city, they give him back the breastplate miraculously caught in their nets: what the sea takes away it also gives back. Thus the natural world miraculously returns to its owner the badge of courtliness and chivalry, beginning thereby to rebuild his identity as a member of society, and Pericles uses a jewel

that he still has on his arm (conveniently) to buy a horse. These are enough to allow him to enter the lists in Pentapolis and compete for Simonides' beautiful daughter Thaisa.

This episode is obviously intended to contrast with 1.1: the tournament takes the place of the riddle. Whereas Antiochus's palace is a Castle Perilous, the contest for the hand of Simonides' daughter is a knightly tournament -- though as each of the knights passes before Thaisa their devices in effect animate the static riddle of Antiochus and make of Pericles himself the biggest riddle of all. Stranger knights are common features in stories of such tournaments (note, by the way, that we have a Stranger Knight in Edgar in *Lear*). This scene (one is reminded of the procession of Trojan warriors in *Troilus and Cressida*) bears some resemblance to actual tournaments conducted in the chivalric revival of Elizabeth's reign. This was an age that loved riddles and puzzles and devices.

Pericles (no surprise) wins the tournament and wins Thaisa. Simonides' relationship with his daughter, as we learn in sc. 3 and later, is tight, but quite different in nature from that of Antiochus with his. In a brief return to Tyre we learn what has happened to Antiochus, burned to a crisp in his chariot, "even in the height and pride of all his glory" 2.4.6 (or, rather, not exactly a crisp, since father and daughter, incestuous to the last, "so stunk" after their death that their former admirers could hardly bring themselves to bury them. Angry nobles insist that Helicanus take control of the kingdom unless Pericles can be found, and Pericles is given a year to return. So we come back to Pentapolis. The other knights are sent away, and Pericles is singled out as Thaisa's intended.

Pericles, once bitten twice shy, reacts with considerable alarm to a letter shown him by Simonides in which Thaisa declares her love for him. Simonides feigns anger (in the way Prospero does with Miranda's intended Ferdinand in *The Tempest*), but this feint is only a modest rite of passage on the way to Thaisa's hand. It is not easy for a father to relinquish his daughter to a husband, as the case of Prospero makes abundantly clear, but ultimately she is freely given.

This could be the end of the play: Antiochus is dead, Pericles has a wife, the bad example of Antiochus has been trumped by the good example of Simonides.

But it is not to be. The third act deals with death and rebirth. A huge storm on their journey back to Tyre induces the pregnant Thaisa's labor. A daughter is born in the midst of the storm, but Thaisa is given up for dead, and must be cast overboard if the storm is to abate. Dead bodies on board cause storms to continue, according to the sailors' beliefs, and so Thaisa becomes a kind of sacrificial offering to the elements. Pericles comments movingly on these events:

A terrible childbed hast thou had, my dear;
No light, no fire: th'unfriendly elements
Forgot thee utterly; nor have I time
To give thee hallow'd to thy grave, but straight
Must cast thee, scarcely coffin'd, in the ooze;
Where, for a monument upon thy bones,

And e'er remaining lamps, the belching whale
 And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse. (3.1.56-63)

“Thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born,” says the Shepherd to his son in *The Winter's Tale*. In the later play, we see very clearly that the deaths of Antigonus and, particularly, Mamillius, are a part of the sacrifice that must be made, the reversals that must be endured, for the world to be renewed. That same dynamic is at work here: the storm must claim its victims even as it renders up the new-born baby.

We should note of this passage that the language and the movement of the verse seem suddenly Shakespearean... as indeed we see from the beginning of the scene, both in the charming monologue of Gower (whose content and cadence take us back to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and in the crafted blank verse that follows.

Thaisa's coffin floats ashore at Ephesus – a place, we remember from *The Comedy of Errors*, renowned for its magic and its witchcraft, as St. Paul and others tell us. Cerimon, the miraculous magus-physician who runs something that looks a little like *ER*, with a touch of Friar Lawrence's cell thrown in, and with more than a touch of Prospero, revives Thaisa, employing music and harmony to do so, in effect calling down to earth the music of the spheres:

'Tis known I ever
 Have studied physic, through which secret art,
 By turning o'er authorities, I have,
 Together with my practice, made familiar
 To me and to my aid the blest infusions
 That dwells in vegetives, in metals, stones;
 And can speak of the disturbances that
 Nature works, and of her cures; which doth give me
 A more content in course of true delight
 Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,
 Or tie my treasure up in silken bags,
 To please the fool and death. (3.2.31-42)

As she revives, Thaisa calls on the goddess Diana. Indeed, she seems content to remain at Ephesus, where Cerimon locates her (*The Comedy of Errors* again) as a priestess at the temple of Diana (sc. 4). This revival, this return from death, makes of Thaisa a kind of spirit in waiting: there is no question at this stage of her reunion with Pericles, no indication of her eagerness to make contact with the larger world. The audience stores her away for use in future miracles....

As for the daughter born at sea, and called Marina, Pericles commits her to the keeping of Cleon and Dionyza in Tharsus and returns to Tyre. (Needless to say, there are a few improbabilities here too, particularly the 14-year abandonment of one's daughter, but we pass them by, as all part of the story.)

And so we jump over fourteen years. The theme of death and rebirth carries across the chronological gap between the third and fourth acts. Marina, Gower tells us, is “by Cleon train’d / In music’s letters,” causing her to gain by such education “all the grace, / Which makes her both the heart and place / Of general wonder.” If Cleon is a good teacher, Dionyza, it turns out, is the next best thing to Lady Macbeth or Goneril -- and Cleon an Albany unable to stand up to her. Leonine is given the task of killing Marina because she is too much competition for Dionyza’s own daughter (envy seems a common thread in the final romances). Even as Leonine raises his arm to strike the blow on the seashore (that borderline between political stability and the formless chaos of the sea), a crowd of pirates emerges providentially from the sea and carries Marina away.... The sea seems to be rapidly achieving the status of character in the play. As for Leonine, he decides that Marina is not likely to reappear, and so he can save his skin by announcing to Dionyza that Marina is indeed dead. If this were a comedy of errors, by this time the sum of errors would threaten to overbalance the entire play: Cleon and Dionyza, misled by Leonine, think Marina dead; Leonine, seeing her carried off by parents, assumes her death; Pericles will also soon assume that she has died.

The setting changes yet again. Now we are in Mytilene with a new cast of characters. Business is bad at the local brothel: we are down to a couple of worn-out whores. Boulton goes to the market to find women and returns with the supposedly dead Marina and the pirates.

We move back, meanwhile, to Tharsus, where Dionyza tells Cleon that when and if Pericles comes back for Marina they will say she died and will erect a monument to her. And this is what happens in scene 4.

The brothel scenes are far and away the best written and most dramatically vivid scenes in the play, and they have been justly praised. Increasingly, the clientele is almost as down at heels as the disease-ridden merchandise, and Boulton’s repeated references to the need to take Marina’s virginity in the interests of commercial profitability carry a deliciously absurd ring: “Faith, I must ravish her, or she’ll disfigure us of all our cavalleria, and make our swearers priests.” The great spirit of virtue is splendidly reduced to a case of inconvenience. But quite apart from their comedic effectiveness, the scenes also play a symbolic role: Marina’s sojourn in the brothel resembles Proserpine’s in the underworld, or a kind of purgatory or hell: says Marina to Boulton, “Thou hold’st a place, for which the pained’st fiend / Of hell would not in reputation change” (4.6.162-3). The beautiful maiden finds herself assailed on every side by the forces of corruption and hopelessness – but her education and her natural charm (aristocracy reveals itself in romance even when it is leveled with the peasantry) make her marvelously persuasive. She talks Lysimachus out of going to bed with her and he supplies her with money anyway. Like Isabella with Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, her rhetorical skills and her virtue go together. She uses the money she has received to buy off Boulton and she proposes that she offer needlework lessons to the local population, a salutary diversification of the brothel business which should not be lost in those much-

touted seminars on Shakespeare for executives. Thus she begins her return to life from her “death” on the beach at Tharsus.

From prostitution to teaching, through rhetorical skill – this is the story of Marina’s reemergence. But there is more, as the fifth act proceeds to tell us. Pericles, reduced to a kind of nervous breakdown through his various tribulations, comes to Mytilene (borne, we assume, by a friendly sea), where his daughter is. It is the time of “God Neptune’s annual feast,” celebrated in July – surely a propitious time for the fecund generosity of both sea and land, and a contrast to the time of winter tempests. There, Pericles is revived in 5.1. by the matchless Marina, brought on shipboard by Lysimachus with the express intention of doing so:

We have a maid in Mytilene, I durst wager,
Would win some words from him ...
She questionless, with her sweet harmony,
And other chosen attractions, would allure
And make a batt’ry through his deafened ports. (5.1.44ff)

And so it is. The very qualities of Marina -- her grace, her talk, her skills, her music – that caused Dionyza to seek to do away with her, here revive her father. Pericles himself has died and is revived, has lost his sense of self and is now induced back to it. This is Cordelia with Lear, or Helena with the King of France in *All’s Well*. Thus, discovering one another’s identity, they are reunited – both of them, in their ways, brought back to life:

O Helicanus, strike me, honour’d sir!
Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
O’er bear the shores of my mortality,
And drown me with their sweetness. O, come hither,
Thou that beget’st him that did thee beget;
Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tharsus,
And found at sea again. (1.1.191-98)

As Pericles, like Lear, falls into a contented sleep, hearing in the background what seems the music of the spheres, he dreams of Diana of Ephesus, who tells him to go to her temple. This time, the sea shows no anger: “In feather’d briefness sails are fill’d, / And wishes fall out as they’re willed,” remarks Gower. At Ephesus, preparing to do sacrifice to Diana (the virgin goddess *par excellence*, we might note, and therefore a suitable patroness most particularly for Marina), he tells his history in the hearing of Cerimon and Thaisa. Recognition follows and he is reunited with Thaisa (“That Thaisa am I, supposed dead / And drown’d”). “You gods,” Pericles declares, “your present kindness / Makes my past miseries sports.” In this grand recognition scene, it is Marina’s turn next: “My heart / Leaps to be gone into my mother’s bosom.” Lysimachus, we are told, will marry Marina and reign in Tyre. And so the play ends.

Recognition scenes are always good theatre, and the concluding act of *Pericles* is no exception. Its story of a family reunited takes us back to the beginning of Shakespeare's career, to *The Comedy of Errors*, with its grand finale in which twins are reunited, a father is reunited with his children, and their mother, lost for years, is found again. But there are two significant differences. First, the family reunion at the end of *The Comedy of Errors* essentially restores the *status quo ante*: the play says nothing about questions of continuity, nothing about the succession of generations. Second, the story of Egeon and his sons which frames the farcical action of most of the play, draws much of its poignancy from the threat of execution that hangs over Egeon's head from the beginning: the providential ending averts a disaster of misfortune. Something different is going on in *Pericles*. Yes, there is abundance of action, as in the earlier play, and, yes, a family is brought together – but the reunion is, above all, an assertion of the triumphant powers of generation, of life. Furthermore, *Pericles* involves more than mere accident: the success is due to a certain miraculous collaboration between a provident nature and human affairs. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the sea that separates the slips of land among which the family members navigate is an empty, lonely agglomeration of water-drops: in *Pericles*, the sea (and its representative collaborator Marina) is an actor in the affairs of human beings, a part of a demanding but ultimately benign universe.

The last word goes to Gower, who reminds us that this is a fiction with a series of morals and a series of characters who offer lessons in morality: it is a story of “Virtue preserv'd from fell destruction's blast.” The play itself becomes a kind of mine for the romances, its huge scope and scattered incidents not yet fully brought under control. Yet its pattern of loss and recovery, of death and rebirth, is the organic pattern set for the final romances....

LECTURE TWO

CYMBELINE

Shakespeare's career spans some 20 or 25 years, from the early 1590s to around 1611 or so, beginning under Elizabeth I in an expanding commercial theater and ending under James I in a theater more in tune with the aesthetic of the court. *Cymbeline* is among Shakespeare's last plays. But Shakespeare's career consists of a constant, and increasingly self-conscious, process of writing and rewriting. The same themes emerge and retreat at various stages in his career, and the same situations are dealt with in different ways and with different thematic implication. Perhaps because there is such a strong and well-established tradition of presenting, observing, and studying Shakespeare plays, it is hard, and perhaps not particularly productive, to see the plays entirely in isolation from one another. *Cymbeline* seems to have more echoes of other plays and other stories than any of the others, even more than *Pericles*.

Such superabundance of what modern critics would call narremes is close to overwhelming. "This play," writes the great Samuel Johnson, never a mincer of words, "has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation" (quoted by Nosworthy, p. xl).

The Augustan Johnson was writing in a very different time from our own, in the eighteenth century, and was more concerned with externalities than we in our post-Freudian day are apt to be. We also need to understand the circumstances of the initial production, since this play was in certain respects a new departure for Shakespeare. In the winter of 1608-09, Shakespeare's company of players, the King's Men, moved into the Blackfriars Theatre, previously occupied by the Children of the Chapel, the "little eyases" alluded to in *Hamlet*. Unlike the Globe, the Blackfriars had a roof, and the audience it attracted was a considerably more up-market crowd than the one at the Globe. It was an audience that expected more of a technical kind from the acting companies it went to see. James I, who came to the throne in 1603, was particularly fond of the masque, courtly entertainment involving elaborate scenery and highly stylized action and stage effects, and each of the plays Shakespeare wrote for the Blackfriars Theatre, probably beginning with *Cymbeline* (1609), contained masque material. We know more or less nothing about the nature of the special effects in these plays, but we are reasonably certain that they went beyond anything that had been seen in Shakespeare's earlier efforts.

So spectacle was probably an important element in the original production. Hence the inclusion of a masque in the fifth act, for example. Furthermore, we make a big mistake if we allow our attention to stay only at the surface level of this play and the other romances: underneath the particularities of plot are much larger thematic concerns. Mark Lamos, when he directed *Cymbeline* for Hartford Stage a few years ago, saw the plot as essentially something that had to be accommodated, the mere vehicle of such larger thematic concerns (he called them “experience of the plays themselves in performance”) – concerns having to do with the reversals of fortune and the triumph of a benign universe over the evils that it inevitably contains.

The elements that make up the plot, apart from the main historical thread derived from Holinshed, are generic and folkloric, or common elements in the literature of the period:

- the cruel stepmother (cf. Dionyza in *Pericles*),
- the sleeping potion (cf. *Romeo and Juliet*),
- changeling princes (cf. Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale*),
- the wife wrongly accused (cf. Hero in *Much Ado*),
- the wager (the test of truth of a man’s wife: cf. the story of Lucretia and Tarquin, which begins with such a wager, here derived, though, mostly from Boccaccio),
- the oracle (cf. *Macbeth*, *The Winter’s Tale*),
- the wandering and unprotected maiden (cf. Julia in *Two Gentlemen* or Viola in *Twelfth Night*),
- the intruder who eats the family’s food (the story of Goldilocks, here presented by Imogen’s eating of the food of Belarius and his sons),
- nobility that reveals itself in spite of the surroundings (cf. Marina in *Pericles*, or Perdita), and of course
- girls disguised as boys.

Here, we also have a wife separated from her husband, and sons separated from their father, plus a king who successfully defends his country against an invasion.

Like *Pericles*, this is a play of scrapes and adventures. As a piece of drama, it is full of set scenes and sudden reversals, accidents and coincidences, unwieldy, but good theater. The key to its success on the stage (and Johnson’s problem may have been that he read it rather than seeing it) is getting the tension between absurdity and sublimity just right. Notice how the play actually emerges: a first scene is shared by two gentlemen –

nameless gentlemen whose function is essentially to provide us with narrative background: the play emerges rather clearly from the printed page, from the realm of narrative. As is so often the case in Shakespeare, the play is clearly a dramatized narrative. Indeed perhaps to stress the point I should emphasize that we should not see the play (as we are inclined to see modern drama) as a stage version of reality, but rather as an acted version of narrative: it is not *fictionalized down* but *concretized up*. If we can accept such absurdities when we read *The Faerie Queene* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we should be able to do the same when we see them on stage.

But in amongst the “impossibility of the events in any system of life,” as Dr. Johnson puts it, is a collection of interesting and intriguing characters: the Queen, Machiavellian and scheming, yet standing up for British independence (a kind of Lady Macbeth who ultimately goes mad and dies); Cymbeline himself, a kind of disoriented and ineffectual Lear; Posthumus, a kind of shape-changer. Bringing this together into a coherent whole requires a focus on theme and broader purpose, yet also a sacrifice of the particular in ways that are barely acceptable. To put it another way, comedy may have to slip over into farce more frequently than we would like, and dramatic tension may have on occasion to give way to visual patterning.

The following scene introduces us to this Queen who is surely larger than life, a schemer, a manipulator, loud, absurd, coarse. Poor Posthumus and Imogen scuttle about the stage like so many sheep, and Cymbeline is massively outwitted by his triumphant spouse. She, in turn, is followed by a scene involving Cloten, her nitwit of a son, where two Lords (again, they have no particular names or faces) play the role of straight man and interpreter (the latter for the benefit of the audience), as Cloten himself makes a bigger and bigger ass of himself. There is really no way of taking such figures entirely seriously. Pisanio tells Imogen about the departure of Posthumus right after this scene, and the lyricism of the episode contrasts sharply with what has gone before and sets Imogen off from her surroundings. She imagines how Posthumus must have faded off into the distance as his ship set sail:

I would have broke mine eye-strings, crack'd them, but
To look upon him, till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle:
Nay, followed him, till he had melted from
The smallness of a gnat, to air: and then
Have turn'd mine eye, and wept. (1.4.17-22)

She tells us how she was cheated of the opportunity to say to him the things she had wanted to say:

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
How I would think on him at certain hours,
Such thoughts, and such: or I could make him swear
The shes of Italy should not betray

Mine interest, and his honour; or have charg'd him,
 At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
 T' encounter me with orisons, for then
 I am in heaven for him; or ere I could
 Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
 Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father,
 And like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
 Shakes all our buds from growing. (1.4.25-37)

Of course, it is this “tyrannous breathing of the north” that wafts Posthumus steadily southwards, away from Imogen: Imogen is another of those daughters (like Desdemona, Hermia, Cordelia, Juliet) at odds with uncomprehending fathers.

The fifth scene of the first act sets up the terms of the wager, so we move to Italy for the occasion. In a sixth scene, the Queen, like the Wicked Witch of the West, is practicing her chemistry with Cornelius – fortunately under circumstances in which her mentor is able to substitute a sleeping potion for the poison she is eager to acquire. No wonder that at the end of this succession of scenes, Imogen comes forward to address the audience directly:

A father cruel, and a step-dame false,
 A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,
 That hath her husband banish'd: -- O, that husband,
 My supreme crown of grief! and those repeated
 Vexations of it! (1.7.1-4)

Her little speech sums up her situation, and in effect completes the introductory cycle of the play: we move from here to the arrival of Iachimo and the further development of the test of chastity.

Be it fictionalization or concretization, the quality of complex and intertwined narrative in *Cymbeline* – what Johnson calls absurdity and confusion – is none the less likely to throw us off and require a moment of explanation. As a general rule of thumb, it seems legitimate to suggest that tragedies are dependent upon the development of the character of a particular individual – humans enmeshed by circumstances, either internal to themselves or external (much of what happens to Romeo and Juliet happens through no fault of their own – indeed the play is arguably concerned with how adults make use of their offspring to perpetuate their vendettas; most of what happens to Macbeth is his own doing; either way, circumstances get the better of the heroes).

Comedies, on the other hand, depend upon triumph over adverse circumstances, either through coincidence and good luck, as in *The Comedy of Errors* or through the healing power of love, as in *As You Like It*, or through magic (which may in turn be a metaphor for something else), as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fundamental to comedies is the simple fact that good triumphs under the most unlikely of circumstances. In other words, a measure of coincidence and happy surprise is necessary to the effect of the denouement.

Comedies are dependent less on probability than on a certain level of plausibility: the coming together of their elements at the end brings tears to our eyes precisely because the possibilities of tragedy in the course of the play are considerable, and because the chances of a happy ending may in certain respects seem slight (happy endings are made happy because we worry that they may not be happy; if you do not collapse in floods of tears at the end of *The Comedy of Errors*, you are either unwilling to accept the plot premises of the play, or you actually believe that things like this happen every day).

In fact, many of the comedies and some of the tragedies, situated as they are in an era of shifting economic values in England, when dynastic and mercantile concerns are being edged out by notions of individual liberty and the integrity of the individual, focus on two views of love, the one dynastic and the other romantic. In *Romeo and Juliet* these two sets of values collide head-on as they do again in *Othello*. They are the beginning point of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which ends by affirming romantic over dynastic. They are also the beginning point of *Cymbeline*: Imogen marries Posthumus despite the fact that her family has other plans. Posthumus, an orphan of no importance but much virtue (after-death is his name because he is the posthumous, or surviving, Leonatus), is preferred over the odious Cloten, who, by marrying Imogen, might capture the throne.

The “confusion of the names” that Johnson refers to points to a coming together of a number of generic elements in a truly unusual combination. *Cymbeline*, like *Lear*, is a play about ancient Britain. *Lear* takes us back even before the coming of the Romans, but *Cymbeline* deals with Roman times. Its huge geographical canvas takes in Rome as well as Britain. Like *Antony and Cleopatra* before it, which oscillates between Rome and Alexandria (with Rome as the desiccated center and Alexandria as the exotic outer rim of empire, and with political empires and erotic empires in competition), and like *Pericles*, which moves across the map of the Mediterranean, the play is anchored in two worlds.

Such contrast, such separation of two dramatic locations, is everywhere in Shakespeare – Verona and Mantua in *Romeo and Juliet*, Verona and Milan in *Two Gentlemen*, Venice and Cyprus (center and periphery, like *Antony and Cleopatra*) in *Othello*, Orsino's palace and Olivia's house in *Twelfth Night*, Venice and Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice*. Sometimes, as in *Othello* or *Pericles*, the chaos of the ocean separates these locations, and the threat of shipwreck or the actuality of it is a factor.

But the Rome of this play is really two worlds, or two aspects of this locus of values: imperial Rome, the Rome of Caius Lucius and the rest, and the conventional Italy of intrigue and love games such as we find in many of the comedies of the era and some of the tragedies (*Othello* for example): Roman honor and Italian trickery. Thus characters like Iachimo and Philario (with Italian names) inhabit a sophisticated, not to say decadent, Italy, while Caius Lucius (with his Roman name) represent a set of old values. The age was conflicted about Italy – home of Cicero and Julius Caesar and Vitruvius, but home also of Alexander VI and Caesar Borgia and of the Neapolitan bone-ache (as Pandarus describes it).² This bifurcated vision is carried wholesale into this play.

² See Marrapodi et al. 1997 for an overview

As for Britain, like Lear's world, it is pre-Christian: the Roman gods, Jupiter at their head, preside over it. The play oscillates not only between London (capital of the Britain that existed before England was founded) and Rome, on a north-south axis, as it were, but also between London and Milford Haven, an east-west axis.

Southeastern London, close to the Continent and meeting point of lines of communication, was seen by Shakespeare's age as the center of sophistication in England (as indeed it was), but also as the center of citified corruption, with the hinterlands, extended northwards to Scotland and westwards to Wales, and of course beyond to Ireland, as areas either of natural virtue or of unmitigated barbarism. The Tudors claimed to come from Wales, and they saw Arthur as their ancestor; the Stuarts, coming from the north, were at least perceived by those with an interest in perceiving them as such, as unsullied outsiders, with British virtue on their side. Milford Haven is in Pembrokeshire, due west of London, and out beyond Cardiff and Swansea in South Wales. It was an embarkation point for Ireland (Richard II went that way to his Irish wars) and for the Mediterranean. But reaching it meant passing through what was then wild and mountainous country in southern Wales – the kind of place in which unspoiled natural virtue, or the perils of savage nature, were equally likely to appear (see Boling 2000 on the role of Wales and the Welsh in this play). In effect, such territory allows for two views of nature: the chivalric (the castle contains virtue; the wilderness contains dragons), or the pastoral (the castle contains corruption; the countryside contains virtue).

A second, east-west movement, then, is overlaid on the north-south one. This second movement emerges in the second half of the play, but is hinted at from the beginning, for example in Imogen's "Would I were / A neat-herd's daughter, and my Leonatus / Our neighbor-shepherd's son" (1.2.79-81). But it is in Act III that it actually begins, at the point where this production, very logically, puts the intermission (at the end of Act III, sc. ii). This second movement features exiles – an older man (Belarius) who is in fact a trusted courtier, who, like Kent in *Lear*, has assumed a disguise in order to survive, and two young princes, also disguised, whose virtue (a point under-stressed in this production) comes through in their behavior because aristocratic virtue is ultimately genetic, not learned, at least in this world-view. Exile, in fact, is the only way to deal with the corrupt court over which Cymbeline presides – either voluntary or involuntary exile: the goal is to bring these scattered elements back together again in harmony.

In other words, we have here, at least in this context, a pastoral retreat – a retreat into the forest, where true values can be found and brought back to restore order in the court and the kingdom. This forest is a place where personalities are put off and exchanged, and where things are not as they seem. In this regard it resembles *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This pastoral dynamic itself occurs in numerous plays, among them *Two Gentlemen, As You Like It*, and *Lear*.

It is also, by the way, a story about Britain's refusal to be subject to Rome (cf. King John's defiance of Pandulph at the beginning of the third act of *King John*, the same location as Cymbeline's defiance of the Romans), but, interestingly, the final resolution is one of peaceful coexistence: the British and Roman worlds, in conflict during much of

the play, are ultimately brought into harmony. In its largest sense, though, *Cymbeline* is about separation and realignment, loss and rediscovery.

In Mark Lamos's production of a few years ago, the extreme beauty of this production made these contrasting worlds very clear to us: the black clothes and red velvet of Roman love-games; the court of Cymbeline (a riot of costuming that perhaps overplayed the exotic somewhat); the hills of Wales (all brown clothing and sack-cloth); the Roman army (ensigns and standards and armor). However, one of the consequences of the sheer quantity and richness of spectacle was that it tended to flatten characterization. Just as the profusion of settings and scenery gives the play richness, so the interaction of character is of crucial importance.

Take for example 1.7, the crucial scene of Iachimo's attempted seduction of Imogen, following her soliloquy that I have just quoted. It is a reprise of the great scene of attempted seduction between Angelo and Isabella in Act 2 of *Measure for Measure*, where Isabella holds to her virtue even at the cost of her brother Claudio's death. On the great empty stage it is hard to give it the intensity, the claustrophobia, that it potentially can carry. It is a scene focused not so much on Iachimo, who is, after all, only an instrument of the plot, but on Imogen. Iachimo, good psychologist, must first separate Imogen from Posthumus, which he does by painting Posthumus's behavior in a particular way, and then, having persuaded Imogen, must work on the notion of revenge. Imogen, desperate, cries out for Pisanio, but in fact Iachimo misreads Imogen: she is not Italian and does not see revenge as an appropriate goal. In a superb shift of tactics, Iachimo goes for the next best thing: if he cannot have Imogen, he can at least pretend to have had her by describing the details of her bedchamber and the intimacies of her body.

This scene establishes the centrality of Imogen: this is a play about a virtuous princess who is estranged from a false family and drawn to a true one, which, in turn, unites, aided by romantic love, to topple a corrupt establishment – or, more to the point, to stamp out the corruption and re-establish a new order based on the old. It is thus, for example, that we should read Cymbeline's final submission to Roman tribute: the good Rome pushes out the bad, and the old order returns, with its strong sinews and its honest relationships.

The seduction scene at the end of the first act is followed by another scene involving Cloten and his two sidekicks at the opening of the second. Again, this is a piece of absurd comedy, offering a diversion between the seduction scene and the Tarquin-like episode of Iachimo's emergence from the trunk in Imogen's bedchamber (put there, we remember, because of some creaky plot-device involving Iachimo's wish to protect his valuables). This is a powerful episode:

The crickets sing, and man's o'er-labour'd sense
Repairs itself by rest. Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd
The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,
How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! fresh lily!
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!

But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,
 How dearly they do't: 'tis her breathing that
 Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o' th' taper
 Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,
 To see th' enclosed lights, now canopied
 Under these windows, white and azure lac'd
 With blue of heaven's own tinct. But my design.
 To note the chamber... (2.2.11-24)

The chamber that he notes is richly and abundantly ornamented – like the chamber in Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes," for example (Walter Jackson Bate, in his biography of Keats, suggests that *Cymbeline* was in Keats's mind as he wrote). Imogen herself has been reading before sleep, and the story is the story of Tereus, who raped Philomela, cutting out her tongue so that she cannot tell her story. She was later transformed by Jove into a nightingale.³

From here we go back to Cloten, but now with one of Shakespeare's greatest songs thrown in, "Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings," clearly offered here as a piece of entertainment to tame the restless Blackfriars crowd (and with larks and lark's tongues and Philomela and nightingales as background images perhaps). Even as the arrival of ambassadors from Rome is announced, Cloten attempts to woo Imogen and is rebuffed contemptuously.

As for Posthumus, his stay in Rome is a disaster from the beginning. This is not the first time he has been drawn into a wager of this kind, as we are told. Last time, the Frenchman bailed him out; this time, no one is able to do so. Lamos dressed him in blue, and these blue garments among the black and the red of the other Italians displayed a quite different set of values. Iachimo's lies to Posthumus in Rome bring us to what might be described as the turning point in the story, Posthumus's long soliloquy at the end of Act 2, with its tirade against women. We have reached a low point.

What do we make of the opening of the third act, in which the Queen and Cloten defy the Roman embassy? Was this played as a kind of comic reprise of *King John*, Shakespeare's play of ten or fifteen years before? For a moment the Queen comes across as Queen Boadicea herself, defying the Roman army with the image of a moated island, secure from the confusions of (to quote *Richard II*, where the original speech of this kind is to be found) "the envy of less happier lands."

Remember, sir, my liege,
 The kings your ancestors, together with
 The natural bravery of your isle, which stands
 As Neptune's park, ribb'd and pal'd in
 With rocks unscaleable and roaring waters,
 With sands that will not bear your enemies' boats,
 But suck them up to th' topmast. A kind of conquest

³ Shakespeare's most direct treatment of the myth is in *Titus Andronicus*.

Caesar made here, but made not here his brag
 Of 'Came, and saw, and overcame:' with shame
 (The first that ever touch'd him) he was carried
 From off our coast, twice beaten: and his shipping
 (Poor ignorant baubles!) on our terrible seas,
 Like egg-shells mov'd upon their surges, crack'd
 As easily 'gainst our rocks. (3.1.17-30)

Regardless of how we read the scene (and I am inclined to see it as a sudden access of patriotism that is at the same time a piece of humor), Cloten is destined for further discomfiture. Act 3 signals a new narrative movement as the test of chastity plays itself out with Posthumus's instructions to Pisanio to kill Imogen. Posthumus's seemingly conflicting messages have Imogen setting out for Milford Haven (into the hinterland of Britain, as it were) to meet Posthumus, and Pisanio setting out with the order to kill her. It is time indeed for us to find Cymbeline's two lost sons in the wilderness, virtuous both because they are cut off from the corruption of the court and because of their genetic nobility.

There is genuine tension in the scene (3.4) in which Pisanio reveals to Imogen the instructions from Posthumus, and his plan to have Imogen seek service with the Emperor Lucius (we seem to be at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*). Goldilocks Imogen transforms herself into a boy, and the confusion of brotherly and sexual love that ensues when she meets up with the two young princes is again cause for a measure of audience amusement (they think she's a boy, when actually she's a girl, who happens in reality to be their sister...).

Cloten, also disguising himself and setting out into the woods, puts on the garments of Posthumus. He does so not because he is contemptuous at Imogen's suggestion that "his meanest garment / That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer / In my respect, than all the hairs above thee" (2.3), but because he seeks, quite literally, to *put on* Posthumus's virtue and can't tell the difference between inward goodness and outward clothing. He does not understand the nature of metaphor, a poor fate for one inhabiting this particular play. True virtue, of course, does not depend on clothing, as Guiderius and Arviragus show. Indeed, while Cloten's borrowed garments survive, the "hairs" (and the head to which they are attached) do not, and are thrown "down the stream."

It would not be right to have Guiderius and Arviragus get clean away without a song, or rather a recitation (Guiderius says he is too sad to sing when they find Imogen, having taken her stepmother's potion, apparently dead). "Fear no more the heat o'th'sun" is another of the musical interludes inserted for the Blackfriars crowd, a sad and exquisite obsequy (4.2.257-281). But if it is one of the more improbable aspects of this duo that they can do stand-up songs, there are still bigger improbabilities to come.

How one deals with headless corpses on stage is one of the great directorial challenges of this play. Laughs may be the only way: such *grand guignol* is more than we can take seriously. But again much depends on the way in which Imogen is played. Arguably the

challenge is to have Imogen's belief that she has lost Posthumus come through to us despite the macabre aspect of the scene (4.2). We, of course, know the truth, but Imogen is caught in the toils of our omniscience (in a way, the problem resembles what to do with the Nurse and Lady Capulet when they discover a sleeping Juliet whom they suppose dead). As she awakes from her dream and into her version of reality, she in effect underlines for us how uncertain that reality really is, and how truths may come through dreams as well as through the day-to-day meaninglessness of one-thing-after-another. As the *deus ex machina* and Posthumus's dream tells us in the final act of the play, providence is as important to the universe as incident.

I need not describe in detail the events that lead to the revealing of Guiderius and Arviragus (formerly Cadwal and Polydore), who, along with their Kent-like father, single-handedly beat back the Roman hordes. "This was a strange chance," says a Lord in 5.3., "A narrow lane, an old man, and two boys." Nor need I recount the details of the masque-like dream of Posthumus (5.4), or the agonizingly spun-out discovery scene with which the play ends. Free of his past, Cymbeline is able to find a new future, and in the reunion of Imogen and Posthumus and the return of her two brothers, memories of the Queen and her son and of the Roman wars are swept away and the old order returns. "Laud we the gods," he cries, "And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils / From our blest altars. Publish we this peace / To all our subjects."

Strikingly, Imogen's reunion with Posthumus and their receipt of Cymbeline's blessing seem overshadowed by what is in effect a political resolution at the end of the play. The play seems a kind of comic *Lear* in which the rehabilitation of Kent and Edgar takes precedence over the reunion with Cordelia. Though Shakespeare certainly kept worrying over the redemptive vision of the romances, the balance of this final scene seems oddly awry. There are ways of dealing with this imbalance, and modern directors do it quite successfully by some judicious rearrangement or cutting, but such is required to restore a certain coherence. One wonders what would happen if a director tried to turn the play into an authentic political statement – and one also wonders whether there was a political agenda behind the play in 1609.

Be that as it may, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* involve huge jumps from one generation to the next, and multiple locations for the action. They share with *Cymbeline* a focus on a virtuous woman and on uncomprehending fathers. They also share with the comedies an interest in disguise and in a kind of sexual equivocation that results from it: the assertion of gender and its role in generation is central to a comedic vision based on notions of a benign nature. In *The Tempest*, by putting his action on a magical island, Shakespeare is able to make differences of place – Milan and Naples – become part of an off-stage geography, and differences of time – Prospero's banishment and Prospero's return – part on an off-stage history. But Prospero's narrative is barely sustainable before a sophisticated audience ("Your tale sir," says Miranda, "would cure deafness"), even if it leads, finally, to the proper and decorous transfer of authority from generation to generation, combined with due recognition of the power of romantic love. *The Tempest* solves the central problem of Shakespeare's plays – succession – through an assertion of

the central power – that of nature benignly deployed. *Cymbeline* is an enchanting and entertaining stop on the way.

LECTURE THREE

THE WINTER'S TALE (1)

The Winter's Tale is the third of the four plays generally categorized as Shakespeare's romances. The term is itself not that of Shakespeare and his contemporaries: the First Folio divides the plays into histories, tragedies and comedies. We have seen already that the keys to this mode of writing can be found, above all, in two places in Shakespeare: in the comedies of the 1590s and in *King Lear*. The early comedies, and particularly *The Comedy of Errors*, present a world that is full of adversities, but they describe adversities overcome, generally against impossible odds. The old man Egeon, wandering across the eastern Mediterranean like a lost Ulysses, miraculously finds his sons, and still more miraculously rediscovers his long-lost wife. The improbable ending of the play, when all the principals find themselves on the stage together, succeeds precisely because it *is* improbable. It presents for us a world of make-believe, or, rather, a world just this side of make-believe – a world in which divine providence takes precedence over probability. Shakespeare emphasizes the power of the family, guarantor of continuity in a world in which misfortune can strike at any time, and giver of life as well as sharer in the burden of death. Above all, *The Comedy of Errors* asserts that things *do* make sense, that life is not just one damn thing after another. In fact, the play turns on a paradox: to go right, we must first go wrong.

The Comedy of Errors is a farce wrapped in a potential tragedy: the framing story is a story of imminent disaster – the execution of an old man whose only crime is to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Of course, both because of its title and its mood, the play announces none the less that it is a comedy: we can only hope that the disorderly lives and misprisions of the early part of the play will be resolved in due course. But such tension between comedy and potential tragedy haunts more or less all of the comedies in one way or another. In the case of *The Merchant of Venice* it almost causes the play to overbalance. Similar tensions rack *Much Ado About Nothing*. Both plays reconstitute their little communities along more stable lines, but only with the exclusion of Shylock in the first and the disappearance of Don John in the second. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is shut out of the consensus at the end, and more than one modern production of that play has caused it (probably wrongly) to teeter on the edge of tragedy. For Shakespeare, what makes comedy happy is in part the fact that unhappiness is kept at bay only rather tenuously.

When we move beyond *Twelfth Night* and into the comedies of the period of the great tragedies, increasingly the tension between comic conclusion and the actual course of events (the one-damn-thing-after-another sequence) is more difficult to reconcile. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena's cure of the King of France has the feeling and effect

of a miracle, but such miraculous power does not make Bertram any less a reluctant husband. The bestower of miracles, Helena, has difficulty getting real life to fit the model. It is almost as though Shakespeare is operating in two realms – the realm of human feeling on the one hand, unpredictable, not given to miracles, intractable; and the realm of the miraculous on the other – offering solutions that are so incredible that they can solve nothing. How can we make the latter answer the former? How can we force our rather mundane human existence to be responsive to the grace contained in the miraculous? Elsewhere and in a different context – the poetry of Spenser rather than the plays of Shakespeare – I have alluded to something I describe as literary grace: the redeeming power of literature. I believe that Spenser saw it as operating in a fashion not dissimilar from theological grace. Shakespeare is fascinated by the writer's power to make sense of life, to give it meaning and direction. This is nowhere more clear than in the final romances, whose universe is invested with models of Christian grace even if, as in *The Winter's Tale*, the setting is ostensibly classical and pre-Christian.

In *Measure for Measure*, the Duke serves as comic guarantor of the essentially tragic action. In contrast to *The Comedy of Errors*, this is tragedy wrapped in comedy, with a Duke able to intervene at any time to set affairs to rights. When he does finally intervene it is not to punish but to forgive: a series of decreed marriages follows a trial, mercy substituting for justice, as it does in its way in *The Merchant of Venice*.

King Lear offers no such consolation – or, more to the point, it hints at such consolation but snatches it away. The play takes us back to the beginning of time, the misty origins of the history of Britain, a once-upon-a-time world. It is a world of wicked sisters and beautiful princesses, in which good is forced into exile or into disguise by the powers of evil, and in which an old and obstinate king learns the virtues of patience and compassion. If we read back into *King Lear* the substance and conception of the last romances, it looks like a romance. Lear, who rejects the bonds of love at the beginning of the play in favor of some foolish calculus of material possession, having passed through the cleansing mortification of the storm, is rewarded by reunion with his estranged daughter, whom he finally comes to understand, much as his minister Gloucester discovers the goodness of his estranged son Edgar. But the redemptive ending that we might expect of such a plot is not forthcoming: no providential coincidence informs the end of the play. Indeed, when the wicked Edmund declares that he will do one last good deed (“Some good I mean to do, / Despite of mine own nature”), we seem on the edge of a happy ending, only to discover that the reprieve comes too late and Cordelia is already dead: no concurrency here, only one-damn-thing-after-another. As for Gloucester, he dies when “his flawed heart ... / ‘Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, / Burst smilingly,” much as Lear expires uncertain whether Cordelia lives or dies. We, of course, know better in knowing the truth: the romance ending has been proffered and withdrawn, and the tragedy is made the greater by the specific withholding of a providence that we are on the verge of expecting. The play tells us, with a kind of cruel and naked honesty, that our social construction of endings is confounded by the incoherence it is designed to cover.

I suppose that in the larger scheme of things the four final romances are no answer to *King Lear*. What could be? Indeed, they turn the subject of *Lear* on its head: *The Winter's Tale* is not about children's cruelty to parents but about parents' cruelty to children. But they are an attempt at such an answer. The question is quite simple, and, I might add, quite modern: Is it possible to give meaning to events? Authors, of course, do it all the time: romance says that *life has meaning*. Shakespeare's romances, including *The Winter's Tale*, proclaim it loud and clear, and, in so doing, they respond to an impulse that is deep in all of us. Aristotle describes it when he speaks of drama as consisting of the imitation of a single and *significant* action

A question that hangs over *The Winter's Tale*, as it hangs over the other romances and over Shakespearean comedy in general, is the extent to which our only possible approach to such plays is to acknowledge that they are fantasy pure and simple (see, for example, Bruce Young's discussion of this issue 1992: 88). Does a play like *As You Like It* allow for a particular kind of sexual titillation because we know rather clearly that it is *mere* fantasy – that the boy playing the girl playing the boy fantasizing that he is a girl is emphatically *not* an inhabitant of the ordinary world? Many years ago, C.L. Barber pointed out to us the element of festival in the comedies and elsewhere: they represent a world in which the normal rules of authority do not apply, and in which, just for a moment, the Lord of Misrule dominates the lawful ruler – Falstaff cocks a snook at Henry IV; Sir Toby humiliates the stick called Malvolio. Ultimately the comedies are deeply conservative, because they reassert authority at the end and bring back rightful rule, but the reassertion of authority has been modified and tempered by the provision of an outlet for high spirits, unlawful thoughts, and destructive fantasies. Comedy licenses fantasy and subversion in order ultimately to control rather than eliminate it, because it is part of the human condition. “This thing of darkness,” says Prospero of Caliban, “I acknowledge mine.”

But Shakespearean comedy, and Shakespearean pastoral, have about them, even at the best of times, a certain melancholy. The winter wind, though not so unkind as man's ingratitude, as Duke Senior points out in *As You Like It*, blows none the less. While Branagh's attempt in the late 1980s at a *Twelfth Night* set in what seems to be a perpetual snowstorm seems no great success, it is within the realms of plausibility. McFarland (1972) describes *The Winter's Tale* as a “winter pastoral” because even the fourth act with its sheep-shearing festival in Bohemia, is poised on the edge of catastrophe, Polixenes being ready to tear it apart whenever he chooses to do so. Even the grand finale of the play has about it a certain restraint – the feeling that if we just express ourselves too jubilantly, or reach out and touch things that should not be touched, the entire vision will vanish (of course *The Tempest* has quite literally such vanishing visions, and a masque whose dominant image is that of the cold but resplendent rainbow). If this be pastoral, it is a measured pastoral. After all, as McFarland observes, in reference to Milton, the purpose of pastoral is “to soften the harshness of actuality, especially to soften the fact of death.” This is made doubly so in the romances because they, in contrast to the earlier comedies tend to reach backward through the generations in order to find the way forward. Barber (Barber and Wheeler 1986: 300-301) remarks, “One can generalize the difference between the festive comedies and the late romances by saying

that where the comedies move out through release from family ties to the creation of new families, the romances, especially *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, move through experiences of loss back to the recovery of family ties in and through the next generation.”

So the answer to *Lear*, if such there be, comes in these four late plays, written, incidentally, for a changing theatre – a place with a roof and hence usable in the winter and in the evenings, with a rather more up-market crowd, and with the machinery for special effects (the masque in *Cymbeline*, for example, or the masque in *The Tempest*). Contemporary with the new-fangled tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, with which they were in competition, their inspiration lies in the world of late Greek romances, those prose narratives written by the likes of Longus and Heliodorus, where fantastic adventures and miraculous escapes carry us into a world of improbabilities and coincidences quite unlike the rather messy and disorganized world that we normally inhabit. These stories, popular more or less continuously from the time of their writing to today, were, as Bruce R. Smith points out (1991: 120), never more popular than in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Longus, Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius “had all been translated into English before 1600,” Smith adds; “These tales transport us into a world of the imagination where anything is possible, where desires, fears, and aggressions of all sorts are given full play, untrammelled by the exigencies of everyday life.” (On Shakespeare and Greek Romances, see Gesner 1970; on the use of the Blackfriars Theatre and its implications, see Gurr 1987: 164-69, and Thomson 1992: 182-83.) At the hands of Shakespeare and his contemporaries the Greek romances were fused through poetry with the sensuous imagery and sexually charged myths of the Greeks and Romans to form the long narrative poems variously known as *epyllia* or Ovidian poems, of which Shakespeare’s own *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are notable examples, and also to animate the stage comedies of the period. The four final romances are products of such fusion, though there is also about them, because of their reliance on stock stories, what David Young has called “a kind of primitivism.”

Pericles is a kind of piling on of the literarily familiar, to form a fantastic construct in which an entire universe conspires to bring good fortune in the face of its opposite. A daughter is reunited with her father, and not just any father, but a father who has gone mad and must be nursed back to his right mind. And, beyond this happy outcome, a mother (the mother so conspicuously missing in *Lear*), is found (like the mother in *The Comedy of Errors*) living the life of a priestess. Pericles, put upon, and buffeted by circumstance, learns patience as *Lear* learns patience. In *Cymbeline* too, an old man rejects his daughter in favor of a scheming wife and her worthless son, only to discover the egregious error of his ways, and, in what can only be described as an orgy of forgiveness, brings everyone together at the end of the play, aided by a Soothsayer whose presence is a kind of guarantee of the significance of time and of history. “The fingers of the pow’rs above do tune / The harmony of this peace,” says the Soothsayer, and *Cymbeline* echoes, “Never was a war did cease, / Ere bloody hands were washed, with such a peace.”

And so we move to *The Winter's Tale*, another story out of old romance – though with a specific and more contemporary source. In 1588 Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Greene published (according to its title page)

Pandosto. The Triumph of Time. Wherein is discovered by a pleasant History, that although by the means of sinister fortune Truth may be concealed, yet by Time, in spite of fortune, it is most manifestly revealed. Pleasant for age to avoid drowsy thoughts, profitable for youth to eschew other wanton pastimes, and bringing both to a desired content. *Temporis filia veritas*. By Robert Greene, Master of Arts in Cambridge. *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*. [He who has mixed profit and pleasure has won every vote.]

Temporis filia veritas, Truth is the daughter of time. When things go wrong, truth goes to ground (as we see in the opening of *Lear*, when Kent and Edgar, in quick succession, assume disguises to protect themselves and yet remain to fight the fight of truth), but time reveals all. While Shakespeare certainly makes changes in Greene's story (he reverses Sicilia and Bohemia, for example, thereby endowing Bohemia with a coastline), Greene's stated intentions throw light on the strategy Shakespeare chose to pursue.

The running title of Greene's book, which was popular and frequently republished, calls it "The History of Dorastus and Fawnia," the Perdita and Florizel characters in Greene's story. As we shall discover, these characters are both central and not central in Shakespeare's play: their adventures are set within a larger frame, that of Leontes and Hermione -- much as, we might add, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the story of Hermia, Lysander, Hero and Demetrius and their adventures in the forest is set within the story of Theseus and Hippolyta of Athens.

Greene links his story very specifically with jealousy and its ill effects – a theme more common in Shakespeare than we might at first imagine, and dealt with most extensively in *Othello* (which this play echoes in many ways). But Shakespeare teases out of the story also a number of other themes that are latent in Greene's narrative, among them:

- The city/country theme in the contrast between Sicilia and Bohemia (Shakespeare makes Greene's Bohemia Sicily and Greene's Sicily Bohemia in order to achieve this effect). The play begins and ends in Sicilia, home of Leontes. Sicilia, with its Greek and Roman associations, is like Athens; Bohemia, with its lonely seacoast and its colorful sheep shearing festival, is like the forest. The opening scene of the play, with its conversation between Archidamus and Camillo, suggests what might in retrospect be construed as a certain decadent opulence in Sicilia, and a certain rural simplicity in Bohemia.
- An examination and critique of pastoral conventions, deriving from the city/country contrast. The play features shepherds living a happy life in a benevolent countryside. Among them is a nobleman pretending to be a shepherd (Sir Philip Sidney's famous romance the *Arcadia* included a sad and melancholy shepherd named Philisides, the alter ego of Sidney himself; the Spanish

Montemayor's *Diana* and the Italian Sannazaro's *Arcadia* also had their aristocrats-in-disguise-as-shepherds). In the midst of the shepherds is a beautiful maiden of aristocratic origins (Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, following numerous sources, had such a maiden, named Pastorella, in the Sixth Book of his poem; Pastorella, by the way, was later captured by Brigands, among whom her virtue shone through, rather as Marina's did in the brothel). The shepherds speak of the passing of the seasons, of flowers and their properties; they sing songs; they dance. (The classic statement of the pastoral background to Shakespeare's plays remains Greenlaw 1916; see also McFarland 1972.)

- An exploration of the theme of art and nature, begun in the pastoral setting of Bohemia, but made stronger by the fact that Hermione, Leontes' rejected queen, does not in fact die but re-emerges as a speaking statue, a kind of resurrection (in Greene, Bellaria actually dies, and Pandosto commits suicide). Given the atmosphere of Sicilia, it is not surprising that virtue might find refuge in art; given the healing powers of nature in Bohemia, it is also not surprising that, the dangers over, art will be restored to nature.

Shakespeare derives his names mostly (and somewhat randomly) from Plutarch's *Lives*, in North's translation (1579; Shakespeare probably used an edition of 1603).

There is, we are told at the outset (1.1. 4) "Great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia." The play will revolve around these two locations, and it will do so in two quite separate parts – separated not only by geographical space and the sixteen years that divide Act 4 from Act 3, but also in the complete division of the tragic mode (and the constant dwelling on death) of the Sicilia of the first half of the play from the comic mode of the second half: what is striking about *The Winter's Tale* is the sharp separation of tragic and comic – a separation reinforced by the generally wintry tone of the first half and the summery tone of the second (efforts to fix the movement of time in this play are abundant but rather unenlightening: see, for example, Bristol 1996, who seeks to link the first half of the play with midwinter and Christmas). Northrop Frye (1986: 160) suggests that the distinction is so great that we might speak of a death-world and a life-world (the myth of Proserpine and her annual sojourn in the underworld is never far from this play).

It is Camillo of Sicilia and the nonce-figure Archidamus of Bohemia who are engaged in filling us in on the basics of the two realms as the play opens. The play will turn on the relationship between these two realms, Bohemia functioning as a kind of pastoral interlude in the midst of the Sicilian reality, and Polixenes, King of Bohemia, as the embodiment of a rather attractive if impecunious life as compared with the dour existence in Sicilia (if Leontes' relative silence at the beginning of the play is any indication):

ARCHIDAMUS. If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on the like occasion whereon my services are now on foot, you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.

CAMILLO. I think, this coming summer, the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.

ARCH. Wherein our entertainment shall shame us: we will be justified in our loves: for indeed –

CAM. Beseech you –

ARCH. Verily I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence – in so rare – I know not what to say... (1.1.1-13)

In due course, it is we who make the transition from Sicilia to Bohemia, rather than Leontes. And we move from court to country, from sophistication to rustic simplicity, much as Archidamus suggests we might. The play turns on this duality.

A fundamental question confronting the director is how to work with this dual setting. In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare presents us with a Roman setting and a British setting, and the play turns in part on the contrast between the two. The Rome of *Cymbeline* is a rather odd mixture of ancient Rome and contemporary Italy: characters with names like Caius Lucius bump up against characters with names like Philario and Iachimo. Constrained by his historical setting, Shakespeare is none the less clearly at pains to stress the contemporary stereotype of an Italy inhabited by unscrupulous and untrustworthy smooth-faced villains. Britain, by contrast, is a realm that, even if it has gone badly wrong, still contains the likes of Guiderius and Arviragus, even if they inhabit the wastes of Wales rather than occupying their rightful places at court. These are not two more or less arbitrarily chosen locations, but a location *out there* and a location *in here*.

Sicilia, even if it evokes Greece and Rome, temples and statuary, is still not far removed from the supposedly over-emotional and sexually charged Italy which England had learned both to fear and to be fascinated by. Now, with Leontes' raging jealousy in command, it is both cold and cruel. When, in 1912, Harley Granville Barker staged the play at the Savoy, following a period at the Court Theatre during which he had essentially revolutionized the staging of Shakespeare, he and the designer Norman Wilkinson chose to present Sicilia as cold and white. For Bohemia, on the other hand, they elected to present a thatched cottage and a row of wattle fencing. "Bohemia is pure Warwickshire," Barker declared (Kennedy 1993: 73; for a contemporary account of the production, see Wells 1997: 183-87). It is true, of course, that the Clown, wandering across the stage lost in calculation of his earnings from each fleece, is not easily distinguishable from the country boy setting off from the hills behind Stratford to Stratford Fair: "Let me see, every 'leven wether tods, every tod yields pound and odd shilling; fifteen hundred shorn, what comes the wool to?" (4.3.32-34) "I cannot do't without counters," he declares, and neither can we, particularly those of us raised under the decimal currency. It is true also that Autolycus is merely an exaggerated example of the trickster to be met with in the byways of England. In short, this land of fantasy may be closer to England than Sicilia can ever be – almost as though the gods came down and lit on Warwickshire, or as though a particular kind of English egalitarianism (part of the nostalgia for past times that may often have afflicted the many country-born Londoners of Shakespeare's day) can temper the excessive savagery of the south.

Is Barker right, then, to see Sicilia and Bohemia not as two distant locations but as an out-there and an in-here? One can at least make a strong case for such a view. It perhaps in part explains Shakespeare's decision to switch Greene's Bohemia and Sicilia – a switch made the more relevant by the fact that the play was performed at the time of the London celebration of the wedding of England's own Princess Elizabeth to Frederick, the Elector Palatine, whose close association with Bohemia made him king of that country in 1619. This notion of an in-here and an out-there had already begun to emerge in the famous Berlin production of the play in 1906 by the brilliant Max Reinhardt, illustrated in Kennedy with three color plates.

As a play set in two contrasting locations, *The Winter's Tale* resembles *Cymbeline*, then, but also *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice* and others (especially *Merchant*, where the stifling atmosphere of citified Venice contrasts with the airy sweetness of Belmont); as a play that falls into distinct and separate halves, it resembles *Timon of Athens*.

But if the first scene introduces us to the play's use of place, there is more that anticipates the action to come. Amid the expressions of generosity, there is perhaps a certain anxious tone to Archidamus's remarks in this opening scene – a concern that Polixenes is now so massively indebted to Leontes that he cannot repay the debt. The dialogue turns on two contrasting views of the relationship: the Bohemian view that the exchange of gifts should be kept in a certain balance, and the Sicilian view that generosity erases indebtedness. As it turns out, Archidamus is right: Leontes, now inhabiting the postlapsarian world of adulthood, concludes, in his bitter calculus of favors, that Polixenes has abused his generosity, misused his trust. Perhaps he has displayed insufficient subservience, has shown a certain kind of forwardness not only with Hermione but in general.

Here in this introductory scene we even confront, glancingly and jokingly, the possibility of the death of Leontes' sole heir Mamillius, an eventuality that occurs all too soon. "I very well agree with you in the hopes of him," says Camillo to Archidamus; "it is a gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh: they that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man." And if he were to die? "If the king had no son," says Archidamus, "they would desire to live on crutches till he had one."

Mamillius will indeed die, killed by the eruption of his father's jealousy against his mother. With the loss of Mamillius, says the Oracle which Cleomenes and Dion have been sent to consult, "the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found." The rest of us, audience as well as Leontes' subjects, must "live on crutches" until that moment comes. The image of such optimistic stumbling forward describes quite precisely the psychic journey from tragedy to romance, from destruction to recovery, that this play traces.

Polixenes, we learn, is on an extended stay, of nine months' duration, in Sicilia. He and Leontes have been friends since childhood (1.1.22): "They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted between them such an affection which cannot choose but branch now" ("branch," of course, is a richly ambiguous word in this context). We might note that this play turns not simply on the relationship of two generations, divided by a space of sixteen years, but really on the relationship of three generations. The raising of the two princes together (retrospectively described) has been followed by separation, in which the two have shaken hands "as over a vast" and embraced "from the ends of opposite winds." Affairs of state and sexual maturity have divided the two, and the blessings of childhood, which superficially may have carried over into adulthood, can no longer contain the stresses and strains of maturity, as we shall subsequently discover. Right now, as for their friendship, "I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it" (1.1.33). The opening of the play presents a picture of generous and unrestrained hospitality (contrasting, by the way, with Bohemian hospitality as epitomized in Perdita's reception of Polixenes and Camillo in Act 4).

Polixenes' version of the past is just one such version, but it is the first. *The Winter's Tale* is a play of conflicting and competing narratives: people are forever telling stories, and insisting that their stories prevail (for some useful comments on "metafiction" in the play, see Slights 1992). The play itself both contains *tales* and is one. Leontes' is the dominant narrative in the first half of the play, backed up as it is by the power of the state. It crushes Polixenes' narrative of childhood: indeed much of Leontes' conduct following the reminiscences of Camillo and Polixenes at the beginning of the play seems calculated to obliterate this version of the past in a massive attack on childhood and succession, not just in the death of Mamillius but also in the cruelty towards the infant Perdita that Leontes displays. Her survival enables the revival of this vision, though, in Act 4: Bohemia is a place where "twinn'd lambs" really do "frisk i' th' sun / And bleat the one at th' other," as Polixenes suggests his childhood with Leontes had resembled, and as Florizel and Perdita seem to be re-living in their sheep-shearing feast. Now, of course, it is Polixenes who is arrayed against this pastoral vision, but with a happier outcome than with Leontes in Sicilia.

We should note in passing that if the duality of Sicilia and Bohemia, of revenge and forgiveness, fixes the larger structures of the play, these structures break down into smaller and more subtle units. The brief and sunny glimpse of the childhood of Leontes and Polixenes gives way to the prolonged reversals of most of the first three acts. But even the sunny fields of Bohemia offer a mere short-lived respite from the dynastic demands of the two kingdoms: even as we enter the sheep-shearing, Polixenes and Camillo enter it too, intent on breaking it apart even as they wonder at its simplicity and beauty. And the virtues of Perdita are in some measure offset by the fleecings of Autolycus. The final resolution of the play is as tentative and fragile as it is miraculous, and it offers a rather tentative and insecure guarantee of harmony.

But let us return to our immediate concerns. Leontes' insistence on his version of the truth has devastating consequences for all involved. McFarland (1972: 129) comments: "Polixenes the friend becomes Polixenes the fugitive. Camillo the loyal retainer becomes

Camillo the traitor, rather than accept Leontes's command and remain as Camillo the murderer. Antigonus the trusted counselor becomes Antigonus the doomed wanderer. Mamillius the prince and heir becomes Mamillius the pining child. Hermione the faithful wife becomes Hermione the accused whore and Hermione the prisoner – finally, Hermione the seeming-dead. And all these things are wrought by Leontes's paranoid rage.”

The Oracle also has a narrative of the future – a narrative that Hermione remains faithful to even as Leontes repudiates it. It is a narrative that comes from a distant country, a place of beauty and wonder and natural fertility as Cleomenes and Dion describe it (3.1.1-3): “The climate's delicate, the air most sweet, / Fertile the isle, the temple much surpassing / The common praise it bears.” And of course Paulina has her own narrative, created in the teeth of events and ultimately emerging victorious. One might argue that her management of the outcome of the play, in which an apparent statue comes to life, constitutes at one and the same time the triumph of art over nature and the triumph of dramatic illusion over mundane truth: hers is the greatest piece of theatricality in the entire play, and it is on this piece of theatre that the happy resolution of the play depends. Here, as in *The Tempest*, the dramatist, like Orpheus (or, perhaps, like Pygmalion), shapes the world: this is not art imitating life, but life reconfigured by art.

Paulina is among the most interesting of Shakespeare's creations. Her management of the final scene of the play, in which she returns Hermione to Leontes, thereby completing a process of feminine redemption that begins with the rediscovery of Perdita, in effect asserts the female principle over the male, or, more precisely, cancels out male excess and destructiveness by the constructive resurrection of the female. Her journey to this point in the play is a journey that takes her by way of initial characterization as a scold – one in a line of Shakespearean scolds going back to Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* (on Paulina as scold, see Scragg 1992: 91-95). Though her bravery and outspokenness (one is reminded of Beatrice's loyalty to Hero) and her eminently playable righteous indignation cause her to stand out from those around her, she also occupies an oddly privileged place in the hierarchy of power in *The Winter's Tale*. Thus, though it is she who thinks up the stratagem of confronting Leontes with his own baby, thereby embarrassing and discomfiting him (as well as denying his authority) to an extreme degree, and though Leontes calls her every name in the book, she escapes punishment. His wrath seems primarily directed at Antigonus for not keeping her under control. It is Antigonus who must take the baby and expose it in “some remote and desert place,” and, if he does so, Paulina will escape punishment:

Mark and perform it: seest thou? for the fail
Of any point in't shall not only be
Death to thyself, but to thy lewd-tongu'd wife
(Whom for this time we pardon). (2.3.169-72)

In the BBC version of the play, the young prince Mamillius appears on stage almost from the beginning: the relationship of the two generations is given immediate visual representation (in a classic discussion of the play, G. Wilson Knight 1948: 78 points out

(a kind of storybook world where the sun always shines), implies none the less that the world of the imagination offers the hope of a better order than the one we meet in Leontes' court at the beginning of the play. Indeed one might argue that the art of storytelling, so rigorously repressed in the first half of the play by Leontes' master narrative, reflects the very spirit of Bohemia, where Autolycus is all story and no substance, and where Autolycus's own practice of fraud and petty thievery is as neutralized a piece of real life in the second half of the play (it seems almost benign) as Mamillius's story is a neutralized piece of fantasy in the first half (it is made futile and irrelevant).

In summary, then, the first half of the play tells a hard and gritty story in which a foolish king destroys everything around him by hanging on, through thick and thin, to his own master narrative, his own interpretation of the past. Leontes has the power to impose the consequences of his version of the past on everyone else. In this process, a different version of the past – that of Polixenes and his innocent childhood – is simply overwhelmed by events. The episode in which Mamillius tries to tell a story is emblematic of the powerlessness of other stories to alter or overcome Leontes' narrative of the past: we see a little boy who is given to storytelling pulverized by a strong king who insists that only *his* story will prevail. Perhaps in some sense we are all of us Mamillius, eager to fantasize but put down by the complex business of getting through the day.

What happens to Leontes happens first and foremost because of his own defects of character, but other powers seem to assist. At some level it is mere coincidence that Leontes' denial of the oracle and Mamillius' death take place in quick succession, but the death adds credence to the notion that there is some higher power guiding our lives. We may, of course, be skeptical of such notions on some level, but, as the narrative proceeds and we are transported to Bohemia and the miraculous survival of Perdita (and also, by the way, the re-creation of the childhood world that Polixenes has described), this higher, redeeming power seems increasingly real. By the end of the play, Mamillius has won: his notion of stories-that-make-sense (the guy gets his girl, the lost are found etc.) wins out over our mundane notion of one-damn-thing-after-another (heavy statistical improbability that guy will get girl, near certainty that the lost child described on the milk carton will never turn up).

It is winter in Sicilia. Polixenes arrived in the spring and is now departing in the winter (the same stormy seas that destroy Antigonus' companions carry Polixenes back to his kingdom). Hermione bears the fruits of the spring (not by way of Polixenes, I hasten to add) in her womb, but Leontes plays the role of god of winter, the destroyer. Even in Bohemia at this season the wind tears ships apart and hungry bears (animals associated in the popular imagination with winter) roam the seashore. But, much as the winter brings the festival of lights, and brings the birth of a holy child, so Hermione's pregnancy offers the promise of a new spring, a new beginning. One need not push the analogy to understand that the infant Perdita, defenseless before the world, will yet rise to fulfill a new promise.

So the play is a winter's tale because it begins in the winter, and describes the consequences of winter. Viola came ashore in a tempest and unlocked the emotional deadlock of *Twelfth Night*, much as the violets of spring dispel the sickness of winter (this play, *Twelfth Night*, with its title drawn from the dead of winter, contrasts with its solstitial opposite, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). There will be loss in the winter of *The Winter's Tale*, as there always is in winter (you tell tales in winter, dream dreams in summer); but also a providential salvation. As Mamillius's tale is to the Ladies, so Shakespeare's tale is to us: it offers us a certain hope amidst adversity, but it may or may not offer us protection.

From the start, Polixenes alludes to time, to "Nine changes of the watery star" (1.2.1), a significant time, given Leontes' suspicions of his wife's infidelity. We are reminded, perhaps, of the overkill of the opening of the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*: "Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round / Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground/And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen/ About the world have times twelve thirties been..." (3.2), or of the opening of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour / Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in / Another moon; but O methinks how slow / The old moon wanes...."

In *The Winter's Tale* the seasons are perhaps less precise: in essence a generalized winter of the first three acts gives way to a generalized summer in Act 4. The climax of Act 5 takes place indoors: there is no reference to seasons at all (though Leontes greets Perdita and Florizel as though they themselves are spring: "Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th' earth" (5.1.151-2). There are few references, if any, to the specifics of the season in the first half of the play, at least until we reach the shores of Bohemia. But the mood is wintry, and the psychic tempests of Leontes' fury translate into the lashing waves that destroy Archidamus' comrades at the end of Act 3 (just as, by the way, Lear's psychic tempests translate into the huge storm of Act 3 and give way to Lear's entrance in Act 4 "fantastically dressed with wild flowers"). The one glimpse of a different season comes in the reference to the childhood bliss of Polixenes and Leontes, a time of seemingly perpetual springtime, the springtime commonly associated with the golden world of childhood in a hundred different literary contexts. Our leap over sixteen years at the opening of Act 4, with the assistance of Time, moves us forward to a new generation – a generation that in effect redeems and cancels out the storms and winter of the previous one, first in a country festival, then in the anticipation of a wedding. There is much speculation in the footnotes as to exactly when the sheep-shearing festival might have taken place, but such speculation is beside the point: this is a generalized summer scene, contrasted with a generalized winter setting earlier in the play, and especially at the end of Act 3. In fact, our first meeting with the fantastical Autolycus in 4.3 features a song about springtime daffodils and the stirring sap, while Camillo and Polixenes, who seem to have wandered out of the first half of the play (the wintry part) and into the second half (the summer part), receive at the hands of Perdita "rosemary and rue; these keep / Seeming and savour all the winter long" (4.4.74-75), and, later on, "flowers / Of middle summer" which "are given / To men of middle age" (106-108). While it is true that shortly hereafter Perdita regrets that she has no "flowers o' th' spring, that might / Become your time of day" (113-114) to strew on Florizel, this may be more a problem of

stage properties than a clear indication of the season of the scene. It is also prelude to one of the most beautiful passages in the play, with its appeal to Proserpina “For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let’st fall / From Dis’s wagon” (116-18).

The constant mutation of the seasons, in fact mutability itself, is at the heart of Time’s speech at the opening of Act 4, a speech which emphasizes Time’s absolute power to order events, indeed to tell its own story:

Let me pass;
The same I am, ere ancient’st order was
Or what is now received. I witness to
The times that brought them in; so shall I do
To th’ freshest things now reigning, and make stale
The glistening of this present, as my tale
Now seems to it. (1.9-15)

We note that Time talks of storytelling, of old tales contrasted with young seasons. The Second Gentleman in 5.2. says, “This news, which is called true, is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion.”

The play, as we have seen, begins with an image of lost childhood – hinted at as Camillo describes the friendship of Leontes and Polixenes in the opening scene (line 23ff), and then set forth in detail in scene 2:

We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk i’ th’ sun,
And bleat the one at th’ other; what we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
That any did; had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher reared
With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
Boldly, ‘Not guilty’; the imposition cleared,
Hereditary ours. (1.2.67-74)

The exchange continues with discussion of the fall – and of the role of women – and Grace. Says Hermione, ironically ominously, “If you would seek us, / We are yours i’ th’ garden” (177). The fall – Leontes’ jealousy – is soon to come. And, when it comes, it takes the form of revulsion against female sexuality, almost as though he, too, shares the childhood vision, but as a time before sexuality intruded.

The first and greatest directorial challenge of the play comes at the very beginning, and it has baffled generations of critics. What are we to make of Leontes’ sudden jealousy? Some productions suggest a relationship between Hermione and Polixenes that borders on the intimate – rather like the intrusion of a girl on the innocent relationship of two male childhood friends. The girl, seeing the closeness of the two boys, seeks to imitate it, thereby pushing the two boys into rivalry (Roberts 1991:159-61 observes that Leontes’

behavior is caused, at least in part, by a kind of explosive sibling rivalry). Occasionally, it is even implied that the closeness of Leontes and Polixenes is in some measure sexually charged, so that it is unclear whether Leontes objects to Polixenes' intrusion on his relationship with Hermione or Hermione's intrusion on his relationship with Polixenes (compare this to a similar fluidity of self-definition and reciprocal definition in the Viola-Cesario / Olivia / Orsino nexus in *Twelfth Night*). Either way, we are faced, here as in many other plays of Shakespeare, with a tension between same-sex friendship and sexual love – the kind of tension that sends Romeo over the wall into Capulet's orchard while his friends shout their obscenities in the street, or the tension that links Valentine and Proteus at the expense of their loyalties to Silvia and Julia.

Rather than seek to explain it, some directors choose instead to make the jealousy come out of nowhere, a sudden intrusion on an otherwise peaceful ménage. Certainly Leontes snaps out of his jealousy in Act 3 almost as suddenly as he falls into it (the actor playing Leontes faces, here and in Act 5, some pretty major problems in finding coherence in Leontes' personality). The opening lines of the second scene will, in their various ways, support either reading. One has the impression, certainly, that Polixenes has no inkling of this side of his male companion's emotional life, but also, in the patience of Hermione, the sense that Hermione has seen it before.

Of course, the ambiguity that delights the critic confounds the director. Choices must be made on the stage. The sheer speed with which Leontes moves into his raging jealousy suggests that Shakespeare is far more interested in the outcome of such jealousy than in its origins. In my view, we must do our best to stage it accordingly. The question of what causes Leontes' jealousy is a lot less interesting than the effect of it – much as the motivation for Lear's odd decision to carve his country into three pieces is altogether less interesting than what follows. Writing about her experience in playing Hermione (for Ronald Eyre at the RSC in 1981), Gemma Jones reminds us that *The Winter's Tale* “is not reality, it is fiction. It is not a documentary drama; it is a fairy tale ... ‘the simpler the better’ seems to be the answer” (Gemma Jones in Brockbank 1985: 162). Knight (1948: 84) describes Leontes' behavior as “self-born and unmotivated.” Peter Brook, in his famous production of *Lear* in the 1960s, emptied the opening scene, where Lear divides his kingdom, of all unnecessary movement, all unnecessary expression, rendering it as a kind of uncivil engineering, in which the forces and stresses of human emotion, drawn from who knows where, cause this little society (which is at the same time a kind of universal society) to whirl apart. One can hardly play *The Winter's Tale* in this same way, but maintaining a certain distance from questions of cause and effect does seem right: one can worry too much about the “actual” relationship among the three protagonists in the period before the play opens. In the BBC production, by the way, one senses in Hermione a longstanding fear of Leontes, and the discovery of a richer and less threatening kind of companionship in her friendship with Polixenes.

Matthews (1962: 182), in a sensitive reading of the play, stresses the sheer perversity of Leontes' sudden jealousy: “The wrong itself is more horrible even than Othello's because the relationship between the husband and wife is more fully developed. Moreover, Leontes had none of the excuses for his blindness which Shakespeare takes

pains to emphasize in Othello's case.... He is not rushed into hasty action by the scheming of a demi-devil; on the contrary he takes time to pause, and all his councillors urge him to reconsider an accusation which in their eyes appears monstrous." Having recognized this fact, we none the less file it away: the play is not really *about* Leontes' jealousy in the way in which *Othello* is about Othello's, but about its effects. Writes Northrop Frye (1986: 154-5) in his consideration of the romances, "Leontes and Posthumus are jealous, and very articulate about it, but their jealousy doesn't have the *size* that Othello's jealousy has." G. Wilson Knight remarks that "Leontes' paroxysms never enjoy Othello's even swell and surge of fully developed emotion" (1948: 81; see also Leavis's essay on the late plays, 1952).

However, the relationship between the jealous outburst and the dialogue that precedes it puzzles and perplexes us, as perhaps it is intended to. Catherine Belsey, in a quite wonderful recent discussion of the play (1999) by way of contemporary visual images of the family, points out that the marriage of Hermione and Leontes is "based explicitly on romantic courtship":

Why, that was when
 Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,
 Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,
 And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter
 'I am yours for ever.' (1.2.101-5)

The play, she argues, describes in these early stages a family tragedy, in which the very freedom of romantic love opens up Leontes' doubts about fidelity (fidelity being so essential a value in Shakespeare), and the very independence of the family makes it hard to stop its self-destruction (on aspects of Freud's concept of family romance in *The Winter's Tale*, see Waller 1992).

On characterization, Frye and Knight make an important point. Characterization in the final plays is less clearly defined, less coherent, than in the great tragedies and the plays before them. Shakespeare allows the stories to carry the plays. Indeed, most productions of *The Winter's Tale* present us with actors falling over themselves to make their characters cohere: Leontes jealous, then contrite, then longsuffering; Polixenes open and forthcoming, then angry at his son; Camillo loyal one minute and willing to compromise the next; Hermione pregnant, then on trial for her life, then emerging as a faux statue after sixteen blank years. These are not *big* characters so much as points in an argument, or in a familiar story. This restraint is almost fatal in the rather pale colors of the hero of *Pericles* and problematic in the protean characters of *Cymbeline*.

However, what makes a play, says Aristotle, is plot. Characterization comes second. Shakespeare's careful concatenation of events, neatly balanced against one another by competing views of reality and by the complex exercise of power in the Sicilian court (a court, by the way, that is not entirely that of the tyrant: the extent to which his followers are willing to defy Leontes suggests that the sudden winter storm of jealousy is not, *pace* the BBC's Hermione, the norm) – this concatenation of events presents its challenges for

the actor but functions as tight and effective theatre. Shakespeare does few things better than confrontation, and the first half of *The Winter's Tale* chronicles a whole series of confrontations.

In fact, we might remember that what seems to the reader an entirely plausible explanation, if not of Leontes' motivation at least of his behavior (namely, jealousy) may look more like a political question on the stage. R.S.White (1985: 148-9) writes intelligently about this aspect of the play, perhaps applying the experience of Lear, quite appropriately, to Leontes: "The words, 'disobedience,' 'tyrannous,' and 'injustice' are on the lips of many people at this stage, and one cannot help feeling that the issue is not so much bound up with sex and psychology as more fundamentally with a political question where a king is demanding obedience for its own sake to legitimize his precarious authority. More generally the feeling is that Leontes is attempting to coerce more wide and non-human forces such as truth and time into a petty form of obedience. The rest of the play shows that not even a king can do this." Others have called Leontes naive, a quality he also shares with Lear.

The BBC production stresses from the outset the isolation of Leontes by dressing him in black (unlike the other characters) and giving him a fur hat. He seems a somewhat distant participant in the banter of Polixenes and Hermione, as though somehow out of his emotional depth. We note that his interventions with Polixenes at the beginning of the scene are relatively short: it is Polixenes and Hermione who do the talking. We note too (and he notes) that, while he cannot persuade Polixenes to stay, Hermione is able to do so: "He'll stay, my lord," says Hermione; "At my request he would not," replies Leontes. And then, suddenly (108ff), Leontes' jealousy bursts out into the open.

Too hot, too hot!
 To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods.
 I have *tremor cordis* in me: my heart dances,
 But not for joy – not joy. This entertainment
 May a free face put on, derive a liberty
 From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
 And well become the agent: 't may, I grant:
 But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers,
 As now they are, and making practis'd smiles
 As in a looking glass...
 ... O, that is entertainment
 My bosom likes not, nor my brows.

A mere eighty lines later, we are into Othello's language, as Leontes rails to the audience against Polixenes (Knight 1948: 80 describes the inarticulate railing as akin to nausea):

Inch-thick, knee-deep; o'er head and wars a fork'd one.
 Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
 Play too; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
 Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour

Will be my knell. (1.2.186-90)

Mamillius, who is onstage the while, of course does not hear or understand Leontes' railing, and Leontes' sending of Mamillius off to play only reinforces the fact that Leontes is using Mamillius both as a kind of reassurance for himself and as an ally against his mother: Leontes' possessiveness comes through very clearly in his conversation with the boy. How different this is from the Golden Age scene of the princes' childhood that we were given just a hundred lines earlier: the golden world where *meum* and *tuum* counted for nothing has been replaced by one in which possession is all-important.

What, in sum, do we make of Leontes' sudden jealousy?

- First, it is logistically needed: Shakespeare is giving us a play about the consequences of jealousy, so he moves us quickly into it, with the same kind of unannounced suddenness that we associate with folk tale – with stories of the kind that Mamillius tells. This is, after all, a romance.... He must move his audience through the episode and beyond as rapidly as he can.
- It is, then, a kind of mythic episode, in which the lack of obvious motivation is in itself a source of its power. There is something deeply willful about it. It does relatively little for the play *King Lear* to lose ourselves in speculation as to why Lear does something as stupid as divide up his kingdom in this fashion: he does it, and there we are.
- It is a challenge for the dramatist and actor. Late Shakespeare is full of such instances of relatively unmotivated behavior (unmotivated in the sense that the dramatist does not provide the motivation): he is forever presenting audience and actors with new challenges to explain the unexplained.
- It may be, as I have already hinted, a kind of brotherly transfer of feelings. “If she is sexually attractive to me,” speculates Leontes, “she must be to him.” Her wooing of him to stay is, then, a sign of deeper things. Desdemona's rather naive lack of discretion with Cassio, her insistence that Othello intervene to rehabilitate Cassio, is a situation somewhat parallel: Othello and Leontes lack the flexibility of emotion, the security of trust, to cope with such displays of affection.
- Thinking of Othello – and of Iago – we are reminded of the equally irrational response of Iago to Cassio: “He hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes mine ugly” (at the heart of this play, after all, is not Othello's jealousy of Desdemona, but Iago's jealousy over Othello – another instance of a girl's intrusion into a boy's world) Leontes seems seized by the impulse to destroy, but also by a deep sense of his own inadequacy. Of Camillo, Leontes later says (2.1.50ff), “He has discover'd my design, and I / Remain a pinch'd thing; yea, a very trick / For them to play at will.”

- Of course Hermione is approaching her ninth month and Polixenes has been there for that long. If Leontes does indeed feel himself inadequate, what more natural than to suppose that his wife “has been sluic’d in ‘s absence / And his pond fish’d by his next neighbour, by / Sir Smile, his neighbour”?

Leontes, then, turns to Mamillius (his name means “little breast”) and tries to make common cause as a man with a child who is not ready for it. He also sees in Mamillius a mirror of his own lost innocence.

Clearly Leontes wants to force events into *his* construction of reality: he works hard to convince Camillo of the rightness of his view, accusing Camillo of negligence for not seeing it:

Ha’ you not seen, Camillo?
 (But that’s past doubt: you have, or your eye-glass
 Is thicker than a cuckold’s horn) or heard?
 (For to a vision so apparent Rumour
 Cannot be mute) or thought? (for cogitation
 Resides not in that man that does not think)
 My wife is slippery? (1.2.267-73)

Camillo, caught in this web of jealousy, finds himself driven out (like Kent), and obliged to side with Polixenes:

I must be the poisoner
 Of good Polixenes, and my ground to do ‘t
 Is the obedience to a master; one
 Who, in rebellion with himself, will have
 All that are his, so too. (1.2.352-56)

Truth is driven out: Camillo rescues Polixenes (“I do believe thee: / I saw his heart in ‘s face. Give me thy hand, / Be pilot to me, and thy places shall / Still neighbor mine” 1.2.447-50). This *right* relationship of man to man, in comradeship, is breached by Leontes’ seizing on Mamillius, which is made doubly clear in 2.1, when Leontes removes Mamillius from Hermione.

Leontes does to Antigonus the same as he has done to Camillo, accusing him of blindness. Thus 2.3 parallels 1.2, and Antigonus becomes a kind of alter ego of Camillo (hence the resolution at the end of the play, where Paulina marries Camillo).

Leontes’ declaration that he has sent Cleomenes and Dion off to the oracle at Delphos takes us back to *Cymbeline*, with its miraculous tablet delivered by Jove. Here the oracle is better orchestrated with the plot. Leontes feels sure it will justify him:

Though I am satisfied, and need no more
 Than what I know, yet shall the Oracle

Give rest to th' minds of others; such as he
Whose ignorant credulity will not
Come up to th' truth. (2.1.190-3)

Paulina, a tough-minded and determined woman whose intervention bypasses the court hierarchy, assumes in 2.2. that the birth of Hermione's daughter will soften Leontes – but the very reverse takes place. His anger rises to a massive crescendo, and he attacks Antigonus, Paulina's husband, for failing to keep Paulina under control:

Thou, traitor, hast set on thy wife to this.
My child? away with 't! Even thou, that hast
A heart so tender o'er it, take it hence
And see it instantly consum'd with fire. (2.3.130-3)

What should be the spring to match the Winter's Tale (the birth of a child) does not materialize. Instead, Leontes only relents enough to have the child exposed:

We enjoin thee,
As thou art liege-man to us, that thou carry
This female bastard hence, and that thou bear it
To some remote and desert place, quite out
Of our dominions; and that there thou leave it
(Without more mercy) to it own protection
And favour of the climate. (2.3.172-8)

Note that this takes place *before* the oracle's verdict is received: Leontes cannot even entertain the possibility that he might be wrong. However, his decision regarding the child to "commend it strangely to some place / Where chance may nurse or end it" offers some hope – at least in the providential world of romance.

The powerful trial scene that follows (3.2), takes us back to *The Merchant of Venice* and to *Measure for Measure* – and forward to Queen Katharine's trial in *Henry VIII*. It is not a trial scene in the conventional sense, but really Hermione's dignified defense of herself against her judge-cum-accuser the King, whose zeal as prosecuting attorney is needed to *justify* his a priori position: he forces the action a particular way to justify himself.

Of course the oracle (whose message is delivered, as we have noted, by a Cleomenes and Dion captivated by the beauty and serenity of its site and the wonder of its pronouncement – an expression, surely, of a different and more merciful truth than the harsh world of Leontes will willingly allow) exculpates Hermione (3.2.130) – but Leontes dismisses it: "There is no truth at all i' th' Oracle: / The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood."

The result of Leontes' offence against truth and against Apollo is immediate and devastating: in quick succession Mamillius is pronounced dead and Hermione collapses. This peripetic moment brings together two very important dramatic strands. Mamillius

dies, when all is said and done, because he cannot deal with the tearing apart of the family and the accusations against his mother: the play is perfectly clear on the matter. We need no oracle to bring us to this point, no supernatural visitation to wreak this vengeance. But the probability of the outcome is given double force by the fact that it accompanies the denial of the oracle: it is a clear affirmation of what I earlier described as the oracle's narrative, which in turn suggests that events make sense.

And now we are faced with the second challenge of the play – how to pull off the contrition of Leontes, which comes with a suddenness equal to his jealousy. “I have too much believ'd mine own suspicion,” he declares as Hermione is carried off..

Apollo, pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine Oracle!
I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy. (3.2.153-7)

But troubles come not singly: Mamillius's death is followed by the alleged death of Hermione. Note that we, as audience, do not know that she is not dead, and hence we do not concern ourselves with the fact that here Paulina (and supposedly Hermione) is taking revenge on Leontes. I wonder what the feminist play “Paulina's February,” spanning sixteen years in the life of Paulina and Hermione, would look like.... Is this female revenge for male aggression? Perhaps. Leontes *offends against* the principle of femininity – above all the cycle of birth and death. As a result, Hermione becomes frozen for much of the play, in effect turned into a work of art, and stored away in the gallery of Paulina's house in the country, a mere memory. Gemma Jones, playing the part, is obliged to confront the problem of Hermione's absence: “Whether she died and was born again; whether she lived in that removed home and nightly cried herself to sleep; whether she was indeed turned to stone? If asked to comment ... I say, ‘She stopped.’ She removed herself from life until the time was ripe for her re-emergence. ‘I have preserved myself,’ she says to Perdita – in a sort of Zen-like aspic” (Brockbank 1985: 162). Barkan (1986: 284), critic rather than actor, adds, “Leontes and Hermione are not independent organisms but a pair of Shakespearean twins, two halves of a single system. The husband treats the wife lovelessly, and she becomes a stony lady.”

But the action moves away from Leontes to follow the fortunes of the baby. We shift to Bohemia, a place both wild and pastoral, rural as opposed to the citified Sicilia. Thus virtue retreats from a corrupt court. We are on the Bohemian seacoast (no matter that there was no such place: we can lose too much time worrying about geographical impossibilities in Shakespeare). The baby is exposed. Antigonus tries to square the event with his conscience, recounting a story of the appearance of her mother in a dream:

If such thing be, thy mother
Appear'd to me last night: for ne'er was dream
So like a waking. To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another;

I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
 So fill'd and so becoming: in pure white robes,
 Like very sanctity, she did approach
 My cabin where I lay. (3.3.17-24)

Hermione instructs Antigonus to take the child to the seacoast of Bohemia and tells him that he will never see Paulina again.

I do believe
 Hermione hath suffer'd death; and that
 Apollo would, this being indeed the issue
 Of King Polixenes, it should there be laid,
 Either for life or death, upon the earth
 Of its right father. (3.3.41-46)

This is only the second person in the play to believe that Perdita, the Lost One, is the child of Polixenes. If Antigonus is right, it changes the entire perspective of the play. No wonder he is consumed by a bear....

Let us stop at this point in the play to ask ourselves a couple of questions. First, given Antigonus's statement, how should we interpret the opening of the play? The evidence would seem to be heavily against Leontes, Antigonus notwithstanding. Apollo apparently punishes Leontes, immediately and devastatingly, when Leontes denies the truth of his oracle, which, after all, exonerates Hermione. Remember, once again, that we do not know that Hermione is not dead.

While it is customary to play Antigonus as a rather broadly comic hen-pecked husband, the reality is that there has been precious little comedy up to this point to relieve the unmitigated misery of the proceedings. Indeed, with the baby exposed on the seashore and Antigonus leaning over it ("Blossom, speed thee well"), the play is in danger of falling into melodrama.

We do not know when the Bear intrudes on the proceedings, how long he has been standing there. This bear, second only to Winnie-the-Pooh in literary fame, breaks through the melodramatic tension of the occasion with feral abruptness. Indeed, in his ferocity he perhaps resembles the suddenness of Leontes' rage, another example of what Roberts (1991) calls "the Wild" breaking into the civility of cultured life. Theories abound as to the bear's provenance. Was one of the local bears, from the bear-baiting place just south of the river, brought in for the occasion? Did someone dress up as a bear? Either way, the incongruity of his appearance on the stage would surely lend more to spectacle than to dramatic intensity. One can imagine a delighted audience cheering at so sudden and emphatic a break in decorum. At one level, the bear is a thoroughly appropriate predator on the wintry Bohemian coast, a second, Leontes-like symbol of the depredations of winter; at another level, he is a ridiculous intruder. And so the romance emphasis on the seasons and on the destruction of winter continues. "Thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born," declares the old Shepherd to his son when the

Shepherd finds the baby and the son recounts the meal that the bear made of Antigonus. But to put these words in the mouth of the obviously blundering Shepherd and his equally awkward son is to puncture the solemnity of the occasion and also to introduce a whole new dimension to the play. Thus, Antigonus, now something of an embarrassment, is conveniently consumed, and high tragedy collides with low comedy to the credit of the latter.

The baby (a) escapes the bear, (b) escapes the shipwreck, and (c) is found by the Shepherd. Like Lear in the storm, this is a baby reduced to total defenselessness, at the mercy of the natural world. But this is a natural world that is selective in its revenge: bears eat grown-ups, not babies. A miraculous child will bring a new spring.

Thus the first half of the play depicts the progressive decay of circumstances in the court of Sicilia: Polixenes is driven out; Hermione is accused and “dies”; Mamillius dies; the baby is exposed. Leontes, for his part, is completely isolated: Polixenes has gone, Hermione is supposedly dead, Mamillius is dead, Perdita has been sent away apparently to her death, Antigonus with her. Friendship, sexual love, family, are all abandoned.

In denying nature, Leontes has also rejected art: he rejects the civilization around him. His courtroom is hardly a place of justice, but one of revenge; he fails to listen to his advisers; his ultimate appeal to the oracle is an appeal to the god who is associated with civilization and culture – with the planting of cities and the creation of an ordered life. And he rejects that too. His reform comes too late.

LECTURE FOUR

THE WINTER'S TALE (2)

Time moves us forward, like Gower in *Pericles*. We cross sixteen years. (In fact, one has the impression that the Shepherd and his son have somehow strayed out of the second half of the play and into the first, where they do not quite belong. Are they really sixteen years older when they reappear in Act 4?) Says Time (I have repunctuated the Arden edition: Time pleases some, tries all, and makes and unfolds error):

I that please some, try all (both joy and terror
Of good and bad), that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. (4.1.1-4)

The world we now enter, hinted at by the appearance of the Shepherd and his son on the scene, is primarily a comic world, just as the one that we have passed through was primarily tragic. We have noted already that this play essentially joins a tragic beginning to a comic ending, the turning-point coming at the end of Act 3 with the abandonment of the baby and its discovery by the shepherds. John Russell Brown (1966: 112) cites E.M.W. Tillyard, who describes *The Winter's Tale* as a presentation of “the whole tragic pattern from prosperity to destruction, regeneration, and still fairer prosperity.” The escape into Bohemia brings within the scope of the fiction not only the spirit of comedy but also the idea of the liberating power of beauty in the person of Perdita, “now grown in grace,” as Time puts it. Young (1972: 134) points out that Time’s appearance separates two forms of time, the first linear and unrelenting, and the second cyclical and restorative. The hard world of Law (epitomized in the court scene of Act 3, with its emphasis on vengeance) is replaced by a redeeming world of Grace. We are reminded again of *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

There is no forgiveness in Sicilia – not by Leontes, not by Camillo, not even by Paulina, whose invention of Hermione’s death is one further blow for the hapless, if guilty, Leontes. In this world of the Old Dispensation, the most that we can hope for is justice, and for patience to endure its miscarriages. With Bohemia and the passing of sixteen years, we enter the world of the New Dispensation, which is both the fulfillment and the redemption of the Old. The scene is ruled over not by a jealous king but by a benign and fetchingly reluctant queen of the feast, Perdita herself. And time seems to stand still. Says Florizel, contemplating Perdita’s beauty,

When you do dance, I wish you
 A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
 Nothing but that, move still, still so,
 And own no other function. (4.4.140-4)

For the moment, at least, it is so, but we know it cannot last.... Some productions of the play double the roles of Hermione and Perdita (Trevor Nunn cast Judi Dench in both roles in the RSC production in 1969; Terry Hands did the same thing with Penny Downie in 1986: see Parsons & Mason 1995: 247), perhaps in part because there is so little overlap of the two roles and because the role of Perdita is problematically ill-defined, but this generational consolidation may make what is already problematic more so....

The world of the sheep-shearing festival, then, is a world of mercy and forgiveness. It is also a world where people laugh, and dance, and sing. Indeed the fourth act, which contains, in the sheep-shearing scene, one of the longest scenes in all of Shakespeare, is really a succession of individual “numbers” – presentations on the stage that show off a series of performers. In essence, it comes in thirteen parts (or slightly more or slightly less, depending on how one makes the divisions):

1. Time (1.1)
2. Polixenes and Camillo: Camillo chooses to stay in Bohemia (1.2)
3. Autolycus sings a song, steals the Clown's money, gives a reprise of the song (1.3)
4. Florizel and Perdita in conversation about their love
5. Polixenes and Camillo, and Perdita and the flowers
6. The shepherds' dance
7. Polixenes talks to the Shepherd about Florizel
8. The arrival of Autolycus singing, his activities as a peddler, another song
9. A dance of satyrs
10. Polixenes reveals himself to Florizel
11. Camillo comes up with a plan
12. Autolycus solus, and his change of clothes; Camillo sends Florizel and Perdita off, Autolycus solus
13. Autolycus works on the Clown and Shepherd.

Particularly toward the end, it is evident that other divisions could be made. But the basic point is quite simple: we have entertainment provided both by Autolycus's songs and his comic activities, and by a couple of dances along the way. There are set scenes involving the shepherds, and through this activity is threaded the story of Florizel and Perdita, Camillo and Polixenes. Getting this right on the stage is no easy undertaking. It calls for spectacle, indeed cannot be adequately sustained without an awareness of the fact that it is an entertainment. But too much spectacle may cause the play to overbalance into incoherence.

And then there is the figure of Autolycus. Autolycus is like no one else in the play, indeed no one else in Shakespeare ("For clowns, Autolycus is the star part," remarks Brown 112, in an enlightening commentary; and see also G. Wilson Knight 1948: 100ff). He is a trickster and a rogue, a thief and a liar; he is a shape-changer – so much so that it is hard to tell whether he is a singer and stand-up comic pushed into the play or a bona fide character in the story of Leontes, Polixenes and the others. He is both commentator and participant. Such characters, half in and half out of the action, are quite common in Shakespeare. One thinks, for example, of the two gentlemen who accompany Cloten in *Cymbeline*, who are both in the play and also questioners from the outside. Archidamus plays this role in *The Winter's Tale*. But Autolycus is so much more: his mercurial presence introduces a kind of duplicity that has no consequences, tricks for their own sake. His triumphant announcement, around line 600, that he has picked the pockets of most of the shepherds neither horrifies nor alarms us (indeed, fleecing may go along with sheep-shearing). Michael Bristol, in a rather overblown analysis of the play (1996: 147-74) describes Autolycus (169) as "a versatile economic opportunist." How much less injurious, we say, is Autolycus's outwitting of fools than Leontes' massive and sinful misprision! Even Camillo's willingness to play along with Florizel to outwit Polixenes comes across less as a sin than as a willingness to back the living, and to back the future. And in the wide and accommodating world of Bohemia such transgression carries fewer consequences than in the tight and constricting court of Leontes (we might note, however, the clever mixture of realism and fantasy, with Perdita as shimmering beauty on the one hand and the Clown with his shopping list on the other).

Florizel's name implies flowers and springtime. It is Flora the goddess of spring whom he invokes at the beginning of the episode. Perdita is dressed in finery, Florizel as a shepherd. Thus in some sense they have changed places. Says Florizel:

These your unusual weeds, to each part of you
Do give a life: no shepherdess, but Flora
Peering in April's front. (4.4.1-3)

Perdita's discussion of flowers with Polixenes and Camillo is important in view of the subsequent action, but also as a continuation of her thematic role. It is she, above all, who carries the promise of fertility and generational change – the promise that Leontes' actions seem calculated to abrogate. Her preoccupation with the seasons is accordingly

appropriate – and not for nothing does Antigonus refer to her as “Blossom” (3.3.44) as he lays her on the ground.

Perdita distributes flowers. Rosemary and rue stay alive all winter, she says: Polixenes associates them with his age, though Perdita herself has endured the worst of winter. Carnations and gillyvors come late in the summer:

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer’s death nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o’ th’ season
Are our carnations and streak’d gillyvors,
Which some call nature’s bastards: of that kind
Our garden’s barren; and I care not
To get slips of them. (4.4.79-85)

Adds Perdita, “I have heard it said / There is an art which, in their piedness, shares / With great creating nature.” Her explanation, that because they are made partly by art they should be avoided (an appropriate enough position, presumably, for an artless shepherdess), is rejected by Polixenes:

Say there be;
Yet nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature – change it rather – but
The art itself is nature. (4.4.88-97)

The debate over the relation of art to nature filled volumes in Shakespeare’s day, and was one of the preoccupations of Renaissance thought (on its role in *The Winter’s Tale*, see Young 1972: 120ff, and Young’s references; also Kermode 1952 and Forker 1992). At its center was the question of the proper role of art. Horace tells us that art delights in order to instruct, and it was commonly held that *dulce* and *utile* accompanied one another, the delight required to make the instruction take, but having no value in itself. When the Puritans objected to images in churches, or debated the value of stained glass or music in the church, they were in effect suggesting that nature and art had parted company, the latter becoming a kind of self-indulgence of its own, an attractive decoy designed by the Devil to sidetrack the Christian in his devotions. George Herbert, particularly, examines this question in the early seventeenth century. “A man that looks on glass,” he writes, “On it may stay his eye, / Or, if he pleases, through it pass / And then the heaven espy.” In a more elaborate treatment of the subject, the poem “The Forerunners,” the speaker says goodbye to poetic images, which he calls “honey of roses, sugarcane,” holding firm to the simple maxim from the Psalms “Thou art still my God.”

Perdita's view of nature is that art can only corrupt it. Others might argue otherwise, pointing out that God himself was the supreme artist, creating the very world itself, and doing so in order that all within it might praise him in a perfect circle of grace and adoration. Of course, since then, humankind has fallen, the original sin in the Garden leading to Adam and Eve's expulsion by an angry God. Perhaps art, dedicated to God, can help set this imperfection to rights. This is really Polixenes' argument: to perfect nature is simply to use an art that is in turn derived from nature.

In the context of the play, both positions are deeply ironic (Wilson Knight points out that Polixenes and Perdita are at cross-purposes because they attribute different meanings to the word "art": Perdita is really referring to "artificiality"). The belief of Perdita, that there should be no mixing of "bark of baser kind" with "bud of nobler race," seems to undermine her situation as a shepherdess vis-à-vis Florizel (it also echoes ironically the false accusation of Leontes about her own bastardy), and Polixenes' belief in the virtues of such cross-fertilization of stock would seem to favor her and weaken the arguments that he is soon to use when he reveals himself. Thus, Polixenes' explanation, that over art is nature, inadvertently justifies Florizel's love for Perdita. Furthermore, the debate over art and nature also glances at that over nature and nurture. As Polixenes and Camillo recognize, her virtues seem to shine through her situation: nature triumphs over nurture. By contrast, later in the play our newly-made noblemen the Shepherd and his son are, so they say, "gentlemen born ... and have been so any time these four hours" (5.2.137).

When Polixenes reveals himself (420ff), his anger parallels the anger of Leontes. More measured and less profane than that of Leontes' it is none the less full: Polixenes is of the old school – and, as Wilson Knight points out (1948: 110), "Shakespeare's fathers are normally tyrannical." Polixenes denounces Perdita and Florizel:

I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briars and made
More homely than thy state. For thee, fond boy,
If I may ever know thou doest but sigh
That thou no more shall see this knack (as never
I mean thou shalt), we'll bar thee from succession,
Not hold thee of our blood. (4.4.426-31)

But Florizel and Perdita, with the assistance of Camillo, make good their escape in the direction of Sicilia, and all is set for a grand reunion on Sicilian soil as the distance between the two courts evaporates (cf. the ending of *Twelfth Night*). Leontes, overcome by the beauty of Florizel and Perdita, chooses, remarkably, to support them against Polixenes, whose stormy arrival is shortly announced.

We come now to another remarkably problematic but interesting scene. The reunion of Marina and Pericles was, you will recall, touching in the extreme, indeed giving rise to some of the best poetry in the play. Marina, however, takes second place to Thaisa in the play's final episode. The two episodes constitute dual recognition scenes, dual elements

in the play's denouement. Here, as we move toward the conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*, a collection of gentlemen (aided by an Autolycus suddenly indistinguishable from a courtier) spin out, with their questions and answers, the entire story of the reunion of Camillo and Leontes, the discovery of the Shepherd's proof of Perdita's ancestry, the reconciliation of the two kings, and the reunion of Perdita and Leontes. Our audience, unaware of Hermione's survival and suddenly deprived of what it must regard as the required recognition scene at the end of the play, must surely be asking what is left. Indeed, we note most particularly that the reconciliation of Polixenes and Leontes is a part of the sequence of events: this relationship must be restored before we can move on to the rediscovery of Hermione. But here, the play, oddly, seems to retreat into the world of narrative from which it gradually emerged through the agency of Camillo in that first scene with Archidamus. Archidamus was mere narrator, cast aside when the scene was over. The three gentlemen are, equally, mere narrators: their description is, as Wilson Knight puts it, "plastic rather than dramatic" (1948: 117), almost like a preparation for the plasticity-turned-drama of Hermione's statue. Their narrative, while filled with the enthusiasm of witnesses to miraculous events, is even delivered in prose, albeit of an affectedly formal kind ("Some of their description might fit a painting by El Greco," observe Barber and Wheeler 1986: 332). And readers of *Pandosto* must surely be at a loss: in Greene's story the Hermione figure does indeed die upon hearing her husband's denial of the truth of the oracle.

"Who was most marble, there chang'd colour," remarks the Third Gentleman (5.2.89) of a particularly moving moment. But the only real hint of what is to come is supplied by this same Third Gentleman at the end of the scene: "Are they returned to the court?" asks the Second Gentleman. "No," the Third Gentleman replies, "The princess hearing of her mother's statue, which is in the keeping of Paulina, -- a piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano," the little group has turned aside to visit Paulina.

Most comedies of Shakespeare take on a certain inevitability in their latter stages, as the dynamics of the play deliver a particular solution, spun out of our expectations of genre, myth, and narrative convention. But this play is different. Shakespeare isolates for us in the final scene a genuine surprise – a surprise that brings us, in a single episode, both a return to life and a final recognition. Thaisa, in *Pericles*, was brought back to life, and she also has reserved for her the final recognition, but the two are separated from one another. Indeed, in *Pericles*, as we have seen, we have two recognition scenes. Theatrically, this climactic doubleness presents something of a problem to the director. *The Winter's Tale* avoids it because Shakespeare deliberately pushes the first round of recognitions off the stage, playing them down to mere narrative. The result is a much more powerful final scene.

Of Julio Romano, the Third Gentleman, unwittingly (or so we presume: only Jennifer Richards, in a recent (1999) essay, seems to doubt the Gentlemen's veracity) reveals more: "Had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione, that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer." In other words, as

Barkan puts it, the statue “has passed that ancient metamorphic test for the mimetic power of art: it appears to be on the verge of coming to life” (1986: 285).

None of this, as we have remarked, takes place on stage. Jennifer Richards’ suggestion that we not forget the fact that the Gentlemen are reporting to *us* something that only *they* have seen is useful in a slightly different way: while Shakespeare could no doubt have produced a series of affecting recognition scenes out of the material so economically yet colorlessly presented by the Gentlemen, he could hardly have told us exactly how to interpret the scenes. This the Gentlemen (characters with absolutely no valency or personality outside this scene) do for us admirably. Shakespeare carries the audience into the grand scene of Hermione’s return to life in complete interpretative lockstep.

It is an immensely difficult scene, but also wonderfully playable – if the audience can be kept in focus. Stanley Wells (1997) prints a fascinating account by Helena Faucit of her performance as Hermione, opposite the legendary William Charles Macready in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne, that still has things to tell us today.

Hermione’s return to life is perfect theatre, pure theatre in fact, even down to the addition of such stage effects as soft music (a possibility at Blackfriars, but hardly among the street noises of the Globe). We who know the play perhaps underestimate the complexity of Hermione’s emergence. Unlike most of Shakespeare’s climactic recognition scenes, the episode comes as a surprise to the audience as well as the characters: “Those outside the play world,” remarks Leah Scragg (1992: 186) “are as unprepared as those within it for the revelation that the Queen is alive, and they thus share in the responses of the *dramatis personae*, rather than anticipating ... the moment of their enlightenment.”

Of course, our questions and our sentiments are not identical to those of the people on the stage, because we see the play through the prism of fiction. Is this Hermione pretending to be a statue or an actor acting the part of a statue (in other words, does the fiction tell us that this is a real person who looks like a statue, or a statue represented on the stage by a real person)? If it is not simply a statue, is it the real Hermione or some simulacrum conjured up by a Paulina who will stop at nothing to discomfit the king who robbed her of her mistress? Paulina’s role, after all, is a rather strange combination of tour guide and high priestess. More than one critic has suggested that she at least pretends to deal in magic, though she is at pains to maintain that she is not doing so (see Yates 1975: 89-90, and also Roberts 1999). As we establish that we are dealing with the “real” Hermione, it avails us nothing to raise questions about the plausibility of the conceit, to ask how a living person could be taken for a statue, or how a real queen could be hidden away for sixteen years in a country house. All these interesting but distracting questions are swept aside by an essential truth: Hermione’s coming down to earth – she who is quite literally (to quote Viola in *Twelfth Night*) like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief – is art redeemed by nature, art preserving truth in stormy times, only now delivering that truth back to the world. It is, in its way, a statement about Shakespeare’s art, and about its function as a preserver of virtue and a bestower of redemptive grace (Frye 1986: 167). Above all, it is a *physical* event: the dialogue dwells on Hermione’s physicality. Leontes contemplating the miraculous transformation of art into nature is challenged in much the

same way as the audience is challenged to make sense of, and to accept, the highly fictive world of Shakespeare's play and its implications for the world outside the theater. In Hermione's statue, as Barkan suggests, mimesis and metamorphosis meet. Young (1972: 139) points out, interestingly, that this last episode makes abundant use of the subjunctive, but Philip Edwards (1968: 149), always an acute critic, describes the episode, somewhat less approvingly, as "a reckless piece of improbability."

We might ask why Paulina should choose to present Hermione to Leontes and the rest in quite this way. Is it simply her sense of theater, the need to organize things just right, as for example Rosalind does at the end of *As You Like It*? I think there is more going on here. Even after sixteen years, even if he has expressed a thousand times his contrition for the disaster his actions caused, Leontes must still undergo this final test. He must say what Paulina and Hermione need him to say, because it is their narrative, their version of the truth, that he must consent to live. At any time Paulina can close the curtain and return Leontes to his mourning and Hermione to her stony half-world. At some point we grasp this, and so we as audience are, figuratively, behind Leontes whispering his lines. Much of the point of recognition scenes is that they are confluences of desire: it is not relief or a sense of neatness that makes the ending of *Twelfth Night* or *The Comedy of Errors* so irresistible, but the coming together of lines of desire. We do not, of course, experience Hermione's feelings for Leontes in quite this way: this final recognition scene is more a demonstration of his contrition than an expression of her desire. Hermione's few words are directed at Perdita because her return is the fulfillment of the Oracle, and her return makes possible the resumption of the forward movement of time. Notoriously, she says not a word directly to Leontes, perhaps because in some sense he has resumed his role as a bit player in the flow of history, as has she, and also because Shakespeare does not wish us even to contemplate the possibility that Hermione ever had it in her power to resume her relationship with Leontes.

Perhaps Edwards's sense of the improbability of the scene springs in part from the lack of precedents. It is simply not usual to have statues come to life on the stage of Shakespeare's time. Occasionally people are frozen into inaction (Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian and Gonzalo and their friends, "charmed" at the beginning of Act 5 of *The Tempest*, come to mind). Indeed, as various people have pointed out, free-standing statues were themselves relative rarities in the England of the early seventeenth century. Modern directors, facing the lack of models, come up with various contrivances to make plausible something that is inherently highly implausible, and they are not always successful (Gemma Jones, for example, writes of performing in something that resembled a shower stall). And such statues were not normally painted (wet paint, you will recall, is rather important in this instance), as Hermione's supposedly is. The one kind of statue that was indeed painted was the funerary statue, sculpted into often elaborately, indeed garishly, painted tombs. In the competition between puritan modesty and the celebration of material success, the latter tended to win out over the former in the churches of Elizabethan England, many of which have now restored their painted tombs of this period to their former ostentatious glory. Belsey (1999: 119) manages to find one precedent for statues coming alive in the anonymous play *The Trial of Chivalry*, printed in 1605, in which the young prince Ferdinand poses on his own monument (he has supposedly been

killed long since), for the benefit of his beloved Katharine. He then descends from the tomb to embrace her. Whether something similar is happening in Shakespeare's play is sheer speculation, but it does lend a certain plausibility to a rather unusual set of circumstances. We might note, by way of reinforcement of this argument, that, while earlier in 5.3 we are told that the little party has 'pass'd through' Paulina's gallery, they are now evidently in her chapel: 5.3.86.

Many critics are bothered by the neat arrangement whereby Leontes marries Paulina off to Camillo at the end (see, for example, Roberts 1991: 163). Perhaps Shakespeare feels the need to tie up that loose end simply out of a sense of neatness: Camillo's efforts to guide the action in the first half of the play failed, while Paulina's efforts in the second half succeeded, but both are organizers of the action. But it is really a sense of conservatism and order that produces this solution. In *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart the female knight may show an admirable independence and may even outshine her future husband Artegall, but ultimately the time comes when she slips back into her female role, putting her weapons aside and submitting herself to her husband. Paulina, we sense, will not easily slip into a subordinate role, anymore than she did so when Antigonus was alive.

Marshall (1991: 41) points out that "criticism of *The Winter's Tale* is divided between approaches that discover miraculous or transcendent elements and those that insist on seeing the action as naturalistic." It is Shakespeare's particular talent to offer both. At one level *The Winter's Tale* is simply a story, with enough of a rational explanation to pass for something at least as plausible as one of Autolycus's broadsheets; at another level it offers, in its presentation of the redemption of nature through art, an allegory of the Christian story of death and redemption. Ultimately, though, it reverses tenor and vehicle: Christian doctrine provides the means for advancing a theory of the redemptive power of art. Hermione returning from the dead emerges free of the taint of adultery put on her by Leontes (much as Hero's "death" in *Much Ado* causes her to shed the accusations directed against her), and also able to erase the hurts committed against her – and her revival is of course reinforced and counterpointed by the grand cycle of the seasons that resonates through the play.

You will recall that at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* the two families resolve to make a statue of their ill-fated children: lost to nature, they may yet live on in art. You will recall, too, the idea of catching through the memory of art the virtues of the young man of the Sonnets. Here, we go one stage further: Art becomes godlike and renders up its blessings to a forgiving world. "That she is living," says Paulina, "Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale: but it appears she lives" (5.3.116-17). And so she does, and so old tales speak truth. Mamillius is dead, but the succession is assured through the female line. Antigonus is dead, but there is still Camillo to marry Paulina. Above all, winter is dead, and we have here the fruits of a fortunate and benign summer, blessing all who are touched by it. A good tale, when all is said and done, to tell in winter.

LECTURE FIVE

THE TEMPEST

Cymbeline, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* are distinguished by a kind of superabundance of action – a profusion of adventures and scrapes, of exotic settings and fantastic occurrences. This is particularly so of *Pericles*, with its wide geographical reach and its multiple locations, and of *Cymbeline*, with its complex and interlocking action. In *The Winter's Tale*, at least the two recognition scenes of *Pericles* are reduced to one, and the contrasting settings of *Cymbeline* (Rome versus Britain, but also London versus Milford Haven) are reduced to a single pair (Sicilia versus Bohemia). However, there is still a profusion of motifs and plot devices here too. If these three, then, are characterized by prodigality, *The Tempest*, by contrast, is marked by remarkable economy.

So many of the thematic concerns of the earlier Shakespeare come together in this final romance. We have noted already that the romance universe, governed by providence rather than probability, can tolerate the most improbable happenings, indeed depends on improbability to make a point about universal beneficence. It is *because* Hermione's reappearance as a statue after sixteen years of apparent death is so hard to believe that her return to life is so deeply satisfying. We have noticed already that this final episode of *The Winter's Tale* is in large part a statement about art: when Truth is driven out of Leontes' court it finds its refuge in the suspended animation of art, much as the young man of the Sonnets is preserved for posterity through the poet's pen: "Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong, / My love shall in my verse ever live young." *The Tempest* is really an extension of this idea: the magus Prospero, *homo faber*, creates through his magic art an entire island. Probability is rendered irrelevant by the appearance not so much of irresistible providence freely received from heaven (that is the formula in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*), but of a premeditated providence produced through the agency of Prospero's magic. Prospero *creates* the action of the play in order to resolve in his own favor a moral issue at one remove from that action. In some sense, then, Prospero is his own playwright and the world of the play his own imaginary world.

But at the same time *The Tempest* is a political play: the struggle for Milan and Naples is renewed in miniature on a distant island. The political theme is not wholly new among this group of plays: something of the same occurs in *Cymbeline*, playing a significant part in the final section of the denouement, but in *Cymbeline* the various thematic interests are never wholly integrated, and politics seem at odds with the play's other concerns (hence, for example, the rather odd scene at the beginning of Act 3, in which Cymbeline, the Queen and Cloten engage in some good patriotic saber-rattling which seems wholly at odds with their characters). In *The Tempest*, the theme is superbly integrated, contributing to an overall tightness of design that we have not encountered before in this group of plays.

Had this play been *Pericles*, or *The Winter's Tale*, it would have looked quite different: a first half set in Milan, where the reclusive Prospero loses his kingdom (and, we assume, his wife) and is exposed to the elements in an open boat with his infant daughter. Years pass (sixteen, probably), and we find the daughter grown up and ready for marriage, and Prospero wiser than before. As Prospero and Miranda are wafted to the seashore of their island, the characters of the first half of the play are shipwrecked sixteen years later on this same island where Prospero has taken refuge. The play now moves to a conclusion through a stripped-down version of the actual play *The Tempest*. In other words, Shakespeare might have confined the action of the actual play to a portion of the second half, with a great deal of dramatic action in Milan in the first half.

Instead, Shakespeare reduces the first half of his plot, the time before the usurpation, to a piece of narration. It is a bold and dramatically rather risky approach: long narrations are hard to sustain. But, just as Shakespeare dispenses with the recognition scene between Leontes and Perdita by rendering it as narrative, so he reduces essential elements in Prospero's story to mere retelling – but the result is a more economical and focused play. It's as though we were not actually to see Venice before we arrived in Cyprus (as in *Othello*), or to watch the story of Pericles' marriage and the birth of Marina unfold before we meet Marina as a grown woman (as in *Pericles*).

Like *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, the action revolves around a father and his daughter. Here, though, the two are thrown together so that everything else is excluded: Prospero with his daughter is a little like Lear with his three daughters, the very focus of our attention. I need not rehearse the frequency with which Shakespeare explores the relationship of fathers and daughters. Mostly, we meet fathers reluctant to give their daughters up into sexuality, or alternatively determined to control that process. Capulet wants to make a dynastic marriage; Egeus wants his daughter to marry Demetrius; Brabantio is horrified that his daughter has run off with the “extravagant and wheeling stranger” the general Othello. Cymbeline wants Imogen to marry the dreadful Cloten; Antiochus will not give his daughter up at all, but has simply shifted her from one role to another – a condition from which she seems to seek escape (“Of all ‘sayed yet, mayst thou prove prosperous!”); Leontes simply denies the parentage of his. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare worries the issue again, finds a solution and (if we wish to distort the history just a little...) stops writing....

While *The Comedy of Errors*, the other play of Shakespeare that is confined to the action of a single day and that must fill in a great deal of information before it can begin, sets about doing so in the very first scene, *The Tempest* throws us first into the action with the initial storm scene of the title. Perhaps this scene, which actually takes us on to the deck of the foundering ship, tells us something about the provenance of the play – written perhaps for the private theatre at Blackfriars and perhaps involving some special effects, as did *Cymbeline* with its masque of Jupiter or *The Winter's Tale* with its bear.

In fact, the text of *The Tempest* is unusually carefully presented: it appears as the first play in the First Folio and exists only in this version. Compared to *The Winter's Tale* or *Cymbeline*, it has an extremely clean text, lacking the poetic rough edges of its

predecessor and presenting relatively few cruxes of the kind caused by the accidentals of production and publication. Its stage directions are elaborate, as though it was perhaps intended to be read as well as performed (on the text see Vaughan & Vaughan).

While so many of Shakespeare's plays emerge from narrative, as though the acting space has to be conjured into existence, and as though dramatization arises from text, *The Tempest* begins with a bang. Clearly Shakespeare felt that depicting his tempest at the outset would produce an impact on the audience. This was not the first instance of a scene set on a ship: another storm in another setting is depicted at the opening of the third act of *Pericles*, where Thaisa gives birth, apparently dies and is in due course pitched overboard, only to be discovered at Ephesus and brought to the wise man Cerimon (and, need I add, brought to life and stored for sixteen years in a local temple, much like Hermione). Perhaps this preliminary run on board a ship emboldened Shakespeare to offer the more elaborate opening of *The Tempest*. Compare it also with the offstage shipwreck at the opening of *Twelfth Night*, where scene-setting in Orsino's house comes first, and the seacoast of Illyria is assigned second place (and under conditions where narrative predominates over action). Hardly surprisingly, with the possibilities of modern cinematography at his disposal, Trevor Nunn, in his film version of *Twelfth Night*, moved the shipwreck to the beginning.

The storm in *The Tempest* provides an occasion for introductions to a sizable portion of the dramatis personae. Alonso, King of Naples, with his brother Sebastian and his son Ferdinand, parallels – or will ultimately parallel – Prospero Duke of Milan with his brother Antonio and his daughter Miranda. As Antonio seizes the throne from Prospero, so Sebastian seeks to do the same, here on the island, from Alonso. But what works in Italy does not work on this miraculous island. And, besides, as the play begins the lives of the entire group are in danger. In this setting, though the faithful counselor Gonzalo may seem a shade sententious, it is he who is right: The Boatswain, he says, will “be hanged yet, / Though every drop of water swear against it / And gape at wid'st to glut him” (1.1.58-60). And it is he who, at scene's end, declares, “Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, long heath, broom, furze, anything” – and, miraculously, the acre of barren ground appears and he and his companions are washed up on it.

We should not underestimate the power of that small but important miracle. Though Antonio and Sebastian are cynics from the beginning, who delight in puncturing and undermining the often foolish idealism of Gonzalo, their realism, with which it is easy for the more unguarded of us to side, is soon shown to be akin to nihilism. The realm of romance is no place for people without values.

In effect, in the theater, Gonzalo claps his hands, the storm ends, and we are transported to dry land and Prospero and Miranda. To reach them we must pass through the storm, through a kind of elemental chaos. Out of that chaos there emerges *terra firma*, an ordered island – and the substance of a play. What we enter is a world of the imagination, a world of metaphor. In such a setting, a different sensibility is at work, people behave differently, and, above all, they understand differently. When, in 2.1,

Antonio and Sebastian in effect pour scorn on the imagination (the imagined commonwealth of Gonzalo), they are playing the role of philistine: they fail to understand the power of metaphor. This play, in fact, is about the power and triumph of the imagination – about fiction so intensely and completely believed as to become fact.

Orpheus, you will recall, caused rocks and stones to move through his music, and caused wild animals to lie down together. In so doing, he reversed, through art, the relationship of form and substance, language and reality. Language changes reality instead of reality language. This is of course the very essence of incantatory magic. It is also the very essence of the creative arts as means of transforming the individual and society. God spoke and it was so.

“If by your Art...” Miranda beings. The storm, it turns out, is a storm created by Prospero’s magic powers. When we learn his background we understand why at 1.2.23 he puts off his “magic garment.” Prospero neglected his rule in Milan, we discover, but he did so in order to learn the secrets of nature. His is the classic dilemma of the tension between the life of action and the life of contemplation. When his faithful counselor Gonzalo puts books in his boat – the boat in which he and his daughter are callously exiled – he provides him with the wherewithal to master his magic arts, and he provides him with something in the larger scheme of things more important than food for the body, namely food for the mind.

Prospero’s island is, then, a place in which Art has mastered Nature. Thus Shakespeare picks up on the theme he has explored in *The Winter’s Tale*. There a baby is exposed; here a father and his daughter are exposed. The baby of *The Winter’s Tale* grows up amid shepherds, in a world where life, and nature, make sense – a world of kindheartedness and simple pleasures. Miranda grows up in a different but equally protected environment.

The story that Prospero tells is long – and it is clear that Shakespeare is nervous about its length. Prospero here mediates between ourselves as audience and the play itself, putting off his magic garment to do so. This is a role that in a different way he plays throughout, since the action of the play is *his* creation. He is quite literally God’s viceroy in his rule of the island. More to the point, he plays the part of the artist: we can see how generations of Shakespeare enthusiasts have seen Prospero as Shakespeare’s alter ego. (In *Pericles* we had Gower; here we have Shakespeare.)

Miranda sleeps: Prospero casts a spell on her. We move on to the next section in the scene: our introduction to Ariel, who functions as Prospero’s executive spirit (cf. Puck’s similar function for Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*). He has organized the shipwreck but seen to it that everyone was brought to shore safely – “Not a hair perished” (217). Ariel was servant to the witch Sycorax, former owner of the island, and “for thou wast a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorr’d commands, / Refusing her grand hests” (272-4) was imprisoned in a cloven pine by the witch. It was Prospero who let this good spirit out when he arrived.

We note, by the way, that Sycorax came to the island much as Prospero did: she was banished from “Argier” and left on the island by sailors, pregnant with the “freckled whelp hag-born” Caliban.

Prospero sends Ariel off and we are ready now for our next introduction – the slave Caliban, carrier of wood. Caliban is a creature of earth just as Ariel is a creature of air: the universe of the *Tempest* is built around the four elements, earth, air, fire and water (as the Peter Greenaway movie *Prospero’s Books* uses as its starting-point and organizing principle). The earthy powers that Caliban represents, disruptive and irrational, must be kept under control, in a state of subjection.

Caliban protests Prospero’s treatment of him:

This island’s mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou cam’st first,
Thou strok’st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in’t; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax – toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was my own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o’ th’ island. (1.2.333-46)

Prospero’s response (346ff) indicates that Caliban’s lusting after Miranda forced him to change his treatment of him, and in essence to abandon any hope of reforming Caliban. He had taught him to speak, he says (355ff), though Caliban curses him for doing so:

You taught me language, and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language! (1.2.365-67)

This episode, and indeed much else in this play, is of great interest to the historian of anthropology, since behind it lies the question of the status of non-European “savages,” an issue brought to the table or given a new urgency by the European discovery of, and encroachment on, the New World. To what extent can “savages” be regarded as rational human beings, to be converted into civilized beings, or to what extent are they representative of powers of darkness, dark parodies of Christian Europeans, to be suppressed and exterminated? Such debates are familiar to the student of early American history. Caliban’s name, perhaps a distortion of “Cannibal,” takes us back to Montaigne’s famous essay *Des cannibales*, with its meditation on European civilization

and its suggestion that, just possibly, the cannibals live a life more uncorrupted than we do.⁴

The Tempest has been read by many as a kind of exploration and critique of imperialism – a theme taken up by Marina Warner in her novel *Indigo* (1992), based on *The Tempest* – and clearly, at a time when colonial expansion was in full spate, these themes sit in the background of the play. Scholars have detected parallels between Shakespeare’s play and descriptions of the New World intended to attract investment in voyages of discovery or in settlement. As recent scholarly focus on the European expansion that followed Columbus has made abundantly clear, there were those who saw in the so-called Indians of the New World examples of appetitive man, of man reduced to beast. But it would be somewhat anachronistic to read the play strictly in these terms. This is not a postcolonialist treatise, but a play that resonates with contemporary ideas about what it means to be human.

Now it is Ferdinand’s turn to arrive. Ariel’s song, a minor interlude in the play and a somewhat threatening one, suggests, with its barking dogs (“Bow, wow! The watchdogs bark”), a disorder barely kept under control – and the reference to dead fathers in the following stanza is also hardly reassuring: “Full fathom five thy father lies; / Of his bones are coral made”). What matters here though is the “sea change / Into something rich and strange...” Ferdinand, washed by the sea, appears to Miranda like a wondrous apparition – “A thing divine; for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble” (421-22), and Miranda seems to Ferdinand “Most sure the goddess on whom these airs attend.”

The two come together in harmony: even their language is the same, to Ferdinand’s considerable surprise (1.2.431). But Prospero resolves to test Ferdinand (we are reminded of Simonides’ testing of Pericles over Thaisa in 2.3), in an elaborate episode that may give us some trouble because of its mean-spiritedness. Prospero suggests that it is necessary “lest too light winning / Make the prize light.”

In effect this is the father testing the suitor. He does so first by charming Ferdinand, then by reducing him to a Caliban, a log-mover. The effect of course is to remove from Ferdinand unnecessary airs, to make him a person without rank. This mortification parallels a kind of pastoral purgation, in which rank counts for nothing – a kind of Florizel experience, or the experience of the king’s sons Guiderius and Arviragus in *Cymbeline*. Note that 20th-century ideas of freedom have no place here: Prospero’s universe is an ordered universe, in which constraints are of great importance, and civility is paramount.

The first act, then, has introduced us in turn to the courtiers from Naples and Milan, and then in scene 2 Prospero and Miranda, Ariel, Caliban; and it has brought Ferdinand and Miranda together. The opening of the second act takes us back to the courtiers. Note that the setting, a distant island, limits the number and the interaction of the characters: this is

⁴ On the status of Caliban there is a large literature. See, notably, Vaughan & Vaughan 1991, Fernández Retamar 1989.

like some Agatha Christie island, a country house gathering, surrounded by a moat, with Prospero as Poirot eager to expose the crime and set all to rights.

Gonzalo, in 2.1, is thankful to be saved from drowning, but Antonio and Sebastian keep up a steady banter that pokes fun at the occasionally Polonius-like counselor. Note the reference (66ff) to the marriage of the “King’s fair daughter Claribel to the king of Tunis.” Evidently Shakespeare saw this island, at least at the narrative level, as lying somewhere between North Africa and Italy – a small-scale Malta, at the edge of the world.

Reference to Claribel does nothing to comfort the grief-stricken Alonso: he has, it seems, lost both son and daughter, the one to the ocean, the other to a distant land. But Gonzalo, in a famous speech, speculates on how he might order things “if he had plantation of the isle.”

I’ th’ commonwealth I would by contraries
 Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
 No occupation: all men idle, all;
 And women too, but innocent and pure:
 No sovereignty...

... All things in common Nature should produce
 Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have; but Nature should bring forth,
 Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people. (2.1.143-52, 155-60)

All the classic dilemmas of utopianism are enumerated in Gonzalo’s speech. He is to be king of the island and yet there would be no sovereignty (to order a country requires force or consent); there would be no trade, but also no poverty; no ownership of land, no warfare – in fact Nature would give all things in abundance and there would be no work at all. We might note first that the notion of “plantation” suggests (at least in Gonzalo’s mind – though not in Antonio’s and Sebastian’s, who construe the word simply as “planting”) colonization in the New World: there has been speculation that Shakespeare had descriptions of Bermuda in mind in his picture of Prospero’s island.

The speech derives from Ovid’s description of the Golden Age, filtered through Montaigne (on Gonzalo’s paradox see, among others, Levin 1969). It was a favorite device of those desirous of colonizing various parts of the world to describe them as earthly paradises. In such an environment, do we *need* a king? Nature itself will ensure

harmony, and there will be no need of a political ruler. The speech, it is worth pointing out, comes more or less out of nowhere – a kind of sudden inspiration on Gonzalo’s part: this is Gonzalo’s judgment about Prospero’s island, his feeling about it and its power. He is both right (in that it is an island created to re-create order) and wrong (the larger world is not like this). Antonio and Sebastian show again that they are out of sympathy with their surroundings – that they lack goodness. They alone remain awake while the others sleep – perhaps because they are beyond the range of Prospero’s sympathetic magic, perhaps because Prospero wishes, as it were, to draw the evil out, perhaps because they have tin ears to music. What no one realizes – Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, Alonso – is that they themselves are unwitting participants in Prospero’s moral utopia: they are not experimenters but experimentees.

If Ferdinand is dead and Claribel distant, Antonio and Sebastian need only kill Alonso (and get rid of Gonzalo) for Sebastian to become king – as Antonio became Duke of Milan. Prospero, through Ariel, intervenes to prevent it by waking the others up. As Antonio and Sebastian plot against Alonso, Trinculo and Stephano (aided by Caliban) engage in a parodic version of a coup against Prospero. Their discovery of Caliban offers amusing commentary on English tales of amazing monsters. “Were I in England now, as once I was,” says Trinculo, “and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian” (2.2.28-33).

Caliban, eager to please (160), swears allegiance to Stephano and Trinculo, who, amazed at their good fortune in having survived the storm, declare that *they* will become rulers now that Alonso and the others are dead. They too speculate on kingship in their own drunken way: “We will inherit here” (175). Their inheritance, from their perspective, is “freedom, high-day, freedom.” We are reminded of the chilling cries of the assassins in *Julius Caesar* (“Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!”) or of similar cries in *Coriolanus* or *Henry VI Part 2* (in Jack Cade’s rebellion). Caliban’s song (line 180ff) is equally threatening: “Ban, ‘Ban, Ca—Caliban / Has a new master. Get a new man! Freedom, high day! High day, freedom! Freedom, high day, freedom!” We should remember the concern about civil unrest in England, not only under Elizabeth (regional uprisings from time to time, primarily for economic reasons) but also under James (the foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was only the most extreme example).

(We note, by the way, that Caliban sees in Stephano and Trinculo god-like creatures much as Miranda has seen the same in Ferdinand. We note too that as Ferdinand is surprised to find Miranda speaking his language, so Stephano is surprised to find Caliban doing so.)

The second act has updated us on the shipwreck. The third moves us back to the end of Act 1, where Ferdinand was made subject to Prospero’s powers. Here we see him moving logs, just as Caliban is the log-mover. This is yet another version of unaccommodated man....

There be some sports are painful, and their labour
 Delight in them sets off: some kinds of baseness
 Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
 Point to rich ends. This my mean task
 Would be as heavy to me as odious, but
 The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
 And makes my labours pleasures: O, she is
 Ten times more gentle than her father's crabb'd,
 And he's composed of harshness. I must remove
 Some thousands of these logs, and pile them up,
 Upon a sore injunction: my sweet mistress
 Weeps when she sees me work. (3.1.1-12)

Ferdinand's admiration of Miranda is based on experience of the world, Miranda's of Ferdinand only on her vision of her father. The contrast in itself is topic for a study on received ideas of gender relations....

Admir'd Miranda!

Indeed the top of admiration! worth
 What's dearest to the world! Full many a lady
 I have ey'd with best regard, and many a time
 Th' harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
 Brought my too diligent ear: for several virtues
 Have I lik'd several women; never any
 With so full soul, but some defect in her
 Did quarrel with the noblest grace she ow'd,
 And put it to the foil; but you, O you,
 So perfect and so peerless, are created
 Of every creature's best! (3.1.37-48)

In any event, Prospero's intervention is a kind of controlled courtship: "For your sake / Am I this patient log-man" (67ff). Prospero, looking on, is pleased: "My rejoicing / As nothing can be more." Like Simonides with Pericles, Prospero is putting his future son-in-law to the test through an exercise in power relations.

We return to Stephano and Trinculo – among whom Ariel sows much entertaining confusion – even as Stephano (33ff) is playing king in his own way (each of the participants in Prospero's universe, including Prospero himself, spins out his own fantasies of kingship): "Trinculo, keep a good tongue in your head: if you prove a mutineer,-- the next tree! The poor monster's my subject, and he shall not suffer indignity" (3.2.33-35)

Caliban explains how they can overcome Prospero: "Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him / I' th' afternoon to sleep" (3.2.85-86). This would be a good time to seize his books and bash him over the head with a log, or run him through with a stake, or cut his throat (Caliban warms to the idea). As for Stephano, he imagines himself married to

Miranda: “Monster, I will kill this man: his daughter and I will be king and queen ... and Trinculo and myself shall be viceroys” (104-6).

Once again a rather menacing and anarchic song, with the refrain “thought is free,” ends the episode. But it is *Ariel* who finds the right tune for Stephano and Trinculo (*Ariel plays the tune on a tabor and pipe*, says the stage direction), causing Caliban to explain how the island is full of sound:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
 Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
 That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
 Will make them sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open, and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd,
 I cried to dream again. (3.2.133-41)

The point of course is that there are, as it were, sight-lines of harmony: the island moves in harmony with the celestial spheres, suspended in a magic realm. Says Stephano, “This will prove a bare kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing” (142).

“Marvellous sweet music” characterizes 3.3 as well, but now a banquet is spread for the courtiers (to Gonzalo’s sympathetic amazement - 28ff) – only to be interrupted by Ariel, who now accuses Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso of bringing about Prospero’s fall (3.3.53ff). The banquet must have required some kind of mechanical arrangement, a further indication that this play made use of special stage equipment such as might have been available at the Blackfriars theatre.

The episode is a kind of play, with Prospero the organizer of the scene. As with Hamlet’s mousetrap, by the time it is over (88ff), Prospero has the courtiers in his power – and now the “excellent dumb discourse” (38ff) and the music of the island become means of proclaiming the truth to Alonso (96ff) – though not to Antonio and Sebastian, who continue to feel that they can somehow overcome these “fiends.”

The fourth act returns us to Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand. Ferdinand’s testing and mortification complete, he is ready for Prospero’s blessing: “All thy vexations / Were but my trials of thy love” (4.1.5-6). Art has tested and controlled Nature: Ferdinand tamed is the sexual impulse tamed and made civilized. He is also a future ruler, whose mettle Prospero must test if he is to succeed in Naples and Milan.

Prospero, concerned father, is still not entirely sure. Hence his fierce admonition to Ferdinand that he not “break her virgin-knot,” a topic that is resumed at line 50 after Ariel has been sent off on a further mission. Says Ferdinand: “The white cold virgin snow upon my heart / Abates the ardour of my liver” (55-56).

And so Prospero conjures up a wedding masque – or at least a betrothal masque – of great beauty. It is the most elaborate of such masques in Shakespeare, very much a feature of the aristocratic entertainments of the time, when masques were growing steadily in popularity at the court and Ben Jonson had begun his collaboration with the great architect Inigo Jones. It also introduces into *The Tempest* the theme of the changing of the seasons, central to *The Winter's Tale* and here performing a similar function: linking the natural cycle of summer and winter to human fecundity and to the succession of generations. In the earlier play, the theme is most carefully worked out in Perdita's presentation of flowers to Polixenes and Camillo: we can see the masque in *The Tempest* as a richly visual expansion of that earlier episode.

The masque begins with Iris, the rainbow, whose cold beauty seems appropriate for the scene she describes as she summons Ceres.

Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease;
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to keep;
Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims,
Which spongy April at thy hest betrimms,
To make cold nymphs chaste crowns; and thy broom groves,
Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves,
Being lass-lorn; thy pole-clipt vineyard;
And thy sea-marge, sterile and rocky hard,
Where thou thyself dost air-the Queen o' th' sky,
Whose wat'ry arch and messenger am I,
Bids thee leave these; and with her sovereign grace,
Here on this grass-plot, in this very place,
To come and sport. (4.1.60-74)

It seems as though, after we have crossed this neatly controlled landscape, we go beyond the “sea marge” to “this grass plot” the island; and now Ceres, goddess of harvest, describes a richer scene (76ff):

Hail, many-coloured messenger, that ne'er
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter;
Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flow'rs
Diffusest honey drops, refreshing show'rs;
And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown
My bosky acres and my unshrub'd down,
Rich scarf to my proud earth-why hath thy Queen
Summon'd me hither to this short-grass'd green?.

Thus the crossing of the edge of the sea, the moving across the land, is a kind of consummation: summer succeeds spring.

Ceres reminds us (88ff) that it was her daughter Proserpine who was carried off to the underworld (“O Proserpina, / For the flowers now that, frightened, thou let’st fall / From Dis’s wagon,” cries Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale* 4.4.116-18). Iris is able to tell her that Venus and Cupid are controlled (92ff) in the harmony of the masque, and thus Juno (marriage) and Ceres (harvest) are linked in perfect harmony (106ff).

The masque is both a useful diversion in a fourth act (Act 4 of *The Winter’s Tale*, as we have already remarked, is like a succession of musical numbers and theatrical turns), and a climax and completion to the courtship of Ferdinand and Miranda. It is also a reflection in miniature of the ordering power of drama itself, and of this play in particular.

Ferdinand (118) is impressed – and Prospero reminds him again that he plays the role of artist (120). “Let me live here ever,” says Ferdinand, like some entranced playgoer. But it cannot be: the action of a story cannot be simply halted. A playgoer, perhaps – but really Ferdinand resembles Peter, James and John looking on at the transfigured Christ (“Lord, it is good for us to be here” *Mark* ch. 9): the Transfiguration was regarded as an example of the conflict of Contemplation and Action.

The “sunburned sicklemen” who now appear on the scene to dance before the assembled company are both a reminder that harvest also means a cutting down as well as a growing up (one thinks of Andrew Marvell’s later poetic character the Mower, or indeed of the traditional figure of Death with his scythe). Their ordered dance, however, is an indication that power and violence, an important element in sexuality, must be controlled in order to be fruitful. They also, of course, provide a rural and pastoral element to supplement the mythological (again we are reminded of *The Winter’s Tale*).

But Prospero, temporarily carried away with his own inventions (but perhaps reminded of less harmonious matters by the reapers) suddenly remembers his political concerns: “I had forgot that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life” (139-41). His famous speech “Our revels now are ended,” often presented as Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage, is in fact a statement about the masque, and a reminder that we must come down from the mountain and deal with the real world.

Ariel has led Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban (a present threat to Prospero) on a merry dance, leaving them in a “filthy-mantled pool.” Caliban, Prospero reminds us (188) is irredeemable and uneducable. Prospero now serves up to the three of them a temptation appropriate for those upon whom “nurture can never stick”: fine clothes that will make them look like courtiers – so that, like the Clown and Shepherd in *The Winter’s Tale*, they can become “gentlemen born.” They are driven off the stage by phantom huntsmen. Everyone, then, is now at Prospero’s mercy and we can move to the conclusion.... “Now does my project gather to a head,” he says to open Act 5.

The courtiers are reduced to repentance, as Ariel tells us (5.1.15). Prospero, in line with the New Dispensation of the romances, is for forgiveness rather than punishment. He addresses Ariel:

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling

Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
 One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
 Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art?
 Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,
 Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part; the rarer action is
 In virtue than in vengeance; they being penitent,
 The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
 Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel;
 My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
 And they shall be themselves. (5.1.21-32)

And now Prospero lays aside his magic:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and
 groves;
 And ye that on the sands with printless foot
 Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
 When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
 By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
 Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
 Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
 To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid-
 Weak masters though ye be-I have be-dimm'd
 The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
 And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
 Set roaring war. To the dread rattling thunder
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
 With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
 The pine and cedar. Graves at my command
 Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth,
 By my so potent art. But this rough magic
 I here abjure; and, when I have requir'd
 Some heavenly music-which even now I do-
 To work mine end upon their senses that
 This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
 Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
 And deeper than did ever plummet sound
 I'll drown my book. (5.1.33-57)

The courtiers are gathered into Prospero's magic circle. Prospero, putting aside the role of magician, now dresses as Duke of Milan – and Ariel celebrates his soon-to-be-recovered freedom. He is sent off to bring the mariners to the gathering.

In *Cymbeline*, the political conclusion to the play in some sense detracts from the grand reunion. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare takes care of politics first, and the grand conclusion is still to come. Alonso, penitent, still mourns the loss of his son. “I,” replies Prospero, meaning something quite different, “have lost a daughter” (148). And so it is that, like Paulina drawing the curtain back to reveal a revived Hermione, “Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess.”

What a perfect image! Chess was regarded as a kind of metaphor for war, an emblematic representation of politics and power. Chess games between lovers are not unusual in pictorial art, or even in literature. But there is more to this remarkable emblem. Ferdinand and Miranda are playing a game – of courtship, but also a political game: Ferdinand, chess-player, is future ruler. Prospero reveals them, as Paulina reveals Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale* – as a kind of play-within-a-play, a work of art within nature-that-is-art. Miranda wonders at the “goodly creatures” (182) here assembled, and Gonzalo, ever optimistic, joys at this happy voyage (205ff), in which much has been found, including “Prospero his dukedom / In a poor isle, and all of us ourselves / When no man was his own” (212-13). “This is as strange a maze as e’er men trod,” says Alonso, “And there is in this business more than nature / Was ever conduct of” (242-44)

But there is still the matter of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano: these apparently worthless pieces of subplot must also be integrated into the texture of forgiveness. The main business of the day completed, Prospero sends Ariel off to free them and bring them to him. They appear on the scene – to the amusement of Sebastian (264) and Antonio (266). Says Prospero:

Mark but the badges of these men, my lords,
Then say if they be true. This mis-shapen knave,
His mother was a witch; and one so strong
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
And deal in her command, without her power.
These three have robb’d me; and this demi-devil –
For he’s a bastard one – had plotted with them
To take my life. Two of these fellows you
Must know and own; this thing of darkness I
Acknowledge mine. (267-76)

Prospero’s final observation (“This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine”) may be no more than a casual identification, or it may carry far broader significance. Many have pointed out that Caliban may represent appetite and will, those aspects of human beings most removed from reason: we cannot deny the Caliban in us, only seek to keep it under control. And perhaps, if Sycorax was able to control the moon, it is her power, here turned to benevolent ends, that Prospero has converted to create his tempest and bring his enemies to the shores of his island.

Prospero's epilogue reminds us quite clearly that as Prospero ruled the play, we rule Prospero. We can imprison him – or with our hands (our applause) and our breaths (our praises) break the spell and fill his sails for Naples.

Conventional wisdom, as I have already pointed out, makes this remarkable play Shakespeare's grand finale. It is easy to read it as such. But it is worth emphasizing that Prospero sails away, not exactly into retirement, but back to Naples and thence to Milan. Prospero has turned the clock back, his exercise of art causing an old wrong to be undone and life to be resumed. But the new life will include a young couple whose dynastic union will bring an old division back together, and Prospero's generation will rest easy in the knowledge that a peaceful future is secure. In this sense, then, this is indeed a retirement: the wedding solemnized, Prospero will "thence retire me to my Milan, where / Every third thought shall be my grave. And as for Shakespeare, whoever he may be, and however his authorship was exercised in this complex group of plays, *Henry VIII* and his work on *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are probably still to come.

Finally, we might note that, if *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's final romance, conclusions are as elusive as ever. *King Lear* gave us a glimpse of a divine and universal providence; in the power of forgiveness it was still there in *Cymbeline*. It was there too in the delicate conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*. But *The Tempest* works itself out not in the context of divine providence but under the control of a grand artist, who, prospering in his magic, causes the world to prosper through his own version of divine providence. A virtuous world becomes a fictive world, and providence slips away from us and back into literature. "Now I want / Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant; / And my ending is despair, / Unless I be reliev'd by prayer." Like George Herbert and his images (in his great poem "The Fore-runners"), "*Thou art still my God* is all that ye / Perhaps with more embellishment can say."

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* = particularly recommended.