Shakespeare and Religion:
Capricious and Concealed Faith in Three Tragicomic Plays

David Charles Vernon
Institut für Englische Philologie
Fachbereich Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften

Im Fachbereich Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften der Freien Universität Berlin eingereichte Dissertation zur Erlangung des Grades eines Doktors der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Doctoral Thesis Submission 2018
Freie Universität Berlin

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Andrew James Johnston

Promotionskommission

1. **Erstgutachter/in (Betreuer/in)**

   Prof. Dr. Andrew James Johnston

2. **Zweitgutachter/in**

   Prof. Dr. Stephan Laqué

3. **Kommissionsmitglied**

   Prof. Dr. Cordula Lemke

4. **Kommissionsmitglied**

   Prof. Dr. Anita Traninger

5. **Kommissionsmitglied
   (promovierte/r akademische/r Mitarbeiter/in)**

   Dr. Margitta Rouse

Date of Defence: 26 November 2018

Contents

Shakespeare und Religion:
Willkürlicher und verborgener Glaube in drei tragikomischen Stücken

Zusammenfassung

In dieser Arbeit werden drei von Shakespeares tragikomischen Stücken analyisert, und zwar durch eine Untersuchung der Auseinandersetzung des Dramatikers mit den laufenden Prozessen der post-reformatorischen Zeit. Durch eine umsichtige, aber dennoch dynamische Herangehensweise an unvorhersehbare und schwankende Glaubensrichtungen, so argumentiere ich, vertieft Shakespeare seine dramatischen, poetischen, metaphysischen und ethischen Sonoritäten, indem er die Trennungen zwischen heilig und säkular, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Fiktion und Realität als unter ständiger Befragung sieht. Diese Arbeit versucht, unsere Beurteilung dieser Stücke durch die Anerkennung der dominanten Stellung der Religion und der Reformation in der Kultur des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts weiter zu erhellen, auch wenn sie aus unserer Perspektive versteckt sein mag. Sie beabsichtigt, den literarischen Apparat des historisierenden Ansatzes zu schärfen, indem sie die Diskussion auf die literarische Eminenz von Dramen zurückverlagert, die dennoch ihre historische Zeit spiegeln und gestalten. Die methodische Herangehensweise dieser Dissertation, die sich auf eine Vielfalt von Beispielen aus einer Reihe literarischer und religiöser Quellen stützt, erlaubt Shakespeares Dramen als religiös geprägte Texte zu untersuchen, die in theologischer, politischer und sozialer Hinsicht fruchtbar sind sowie skeptische Fragen aufwerfen, aber zugleich direkte Antworten behutsam umgehen.

Im einführenden Kapitel wird argumentiert, dass die kritische "religiöse Wende" in Shakespeare- und Frühneuzeitstudien richtigerweise versucht hat, Texte in ihren historischen Rahmen zu stellen, um die einschlägigen konfessionellen Anliegen der Zeit wiederzubeleben, dass eine solche Kontextualisierung der Werke aber oft zu einer Darstellung der Werke als phantasievolle literarische Schöpfungen führt(e). Das zweite Kapitel befasst sich mit der kritischen Geschichte der tragikomischen Stücke von ihren ersten Aufführungen bis zur Gegenwart, um die Notwendigkeit eines intellektuellen Gleichgewichts zwischen den Extremitäten der Interpretationen zu erkennen. Das dritte Kapitel bewertet die theologischen, kirchlichen und theatralischen Achsen der vor- und nachreformatorischen Ära, insbesondere unter Berücksichtigung des Engagements zwischen Kirche und Schauspielhaus. In den folgenden Kapiteln wird untersucht, wie drei besondere Shakespeare-Tragikomödien sich mit den Problemen und Kuriositäten aus der Zeit nach der Reformation auseinandersetzen. Meine Interpretationen lokalisieren den umfassenden Weg des religiösen Denkens in diesen Stücken, zunächst durch die Untersuchung der zeitlichen religiösen Belange von *Perikles (Pericles)*, dann durch eine Untersuchung in Shakespeares Behandlung von Eschatologie und Religionspolitik in *Das Wintermärchen (The Winter's Tale),* und schließlich durch die Betrachtung der Resonanz von religiösen Umwälzungen auf Autorität und Rechtsprechung in *Der Sturm (The Tempest).*

Shakespeare and Religion:
Capricious and Concealed Faith in Three Tragicomic Plays

Abstract

This thesis undertakes a consideration of three of Shakespeare's tragicomic plays through an assessment of the playwright's engagement with the ongoing processes of the post-Reformation period. Through a circumspect but nonetheless dynamic approach to unpredictable and fluctuating faiths, I argue, Shakespeare deepens his dramatic, poetic, metaphysical and ethical sonorities, seeing the divisions between sacred and secular, past and present, fiction and reality as under continual interrogation. This thesis seeks to further elucidate our appreciation of the these plays through recognition of the dominant position of religion and the Reformation in early seventeenth century culture, even as it can be hidden from our perspective(s). It intends to sharpen the literary apparatus of the historicist approach, relocating the discussion back to the literary eminence of dramas that nonetheless mirror and make their historical time. Drawing upon a diversity of instances from an assortment of literary and religious sources, the methodological approach implemented by this dissertation occasions the treatment of Shakespeare's dramas as religiously responsive texts, fertile in theological, political and social import, sceptically raising questions but judiciously circumventing comfortable or direct answers.

The introductory chapter argues that the critical 'religious turn' in Shakespearean and early modern studies has correctly sought to place texts within their historical framework, with a view to revitalising the relevant confessional concerns of the period, yet all too often they have done so at the expense of employing such contextualisation to the service of these works as imaginative literary creations. The second chapter surveys the critical history of the tragicomic plays from their first performances to the present, in order to see the need for an intellectual equilibrium between the extremities of interpretations. The third chapter assesses the theological, ecclesiastical and theatrical axes of the pre- and post-Reformation era, in particular considering the engagement between church and playhouse. The next chapters explore how three particular Shakespearean tragicomedies engage with the problems and curiosities raised in the post-Reformation period. My interpretations locate the comprehensive trajectory of religious thought in these plays, first by examining the temporal religious concerns of *Pericles*, then by looking at Shakespeare's treatment of eschatology and religious politics in *The Winter's Tale*, and finally by contemplating the resonance of religious upheavals on authority and jurisdiction in *The Tempest*.

Acknowledgements

E quant' io l'abbia in grado, mentre io vivo
convien che nella mia lingua si scerna.

Dante: *L'Inferno*, XV: 86-7.

CHAPTER ONE

Shakespeare and Religion: Problems and Opportunities

No kind of thing keeps aye his shape and hue.
For nature, loving ever change, repairs one shape anew
Upon another. Neither doth there perish aught (trust me)
In all the world but, altering, takes new shape. For that which we
Do term by name of being born is for to gin to be
Another thing than that it was; and likewise for to die,
To cease to be the thing it was. And though that variably
Things pass perchance from place to place, yet all, from whence
      they came
Returning, do unperished continue still the same.

– Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (XV.276-84)[1]

Sacred poetry, spiritual drama, and unambiguously religious texts (homilies, sermons, the Bible) are no longer the only subjects of literary theological exploration. Non-religious plays too have been re-examined and are less prone either to a circumscribed secularity or to a purely allegorical Christianizing and are now revealed as complex indicators of the period's intense and almost unavoidable concern with religious matters. Contemporary literary criticism has come to acknowledge the omphalic position of religion in early modern culture. Accordingly, the intricate and pervasive nature of faith throughout early modern culture has been substantiated, and sacred/ secular textual genres usually regarded separately have been appreciated anew so that intense theological discussions and debates can be seen as verbalised and enacted on the stage.

Far from being an emptying out of a religious framework into secularism, early modern dramatic representation characterizes the negotiations and interrogations of the permeable border between the sacred and the secular, so that religion is not as 'religious' as we thought, and 'intersects with the world in its totality, not in some hermetically sealed sphere of its own.'[2] Moreover, in many ways the upheaval in religious practice and politics of religion – which we label 'the Reformation' – is insincere, for it is a 'ragged shorthand for the domino of personal, communal, and national transformations which it provoked. The Reformation came to mean a rupture in the fabric of life as deep as any in European history, affecting anything from breakfast to sex.'[3]

As Debora Shuger has proposed, it is hardly likely 'that the popular drama of a religiously saturated culture could, by a secular miracle, have extricated itself from the

---

[1] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding (1567), ed. Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 443.
[2] Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 14.
[3] Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. xiii.

theocentric orientation informing the discourses of politics, gender, social order and history'[4] and this 'made for exciting drama […] with religious innuendo as with sexual, there are climates when one does not need to say much to get people's minds working.'[5] This thesis explores the approaches through which Shakespeare stimulated those people's minds in three late plays: *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. It sees the plays consider the resources of religious language and sectarian tensions within a hybridized culture as an opportunity for dramaturgical, social, political – as well as theological – discussions, where religion and the theatre could inventively interact, the former performing a creative function for the latter. We will see that while plays generally (and Shakespeare's in particular), prompt questions and discussions they do not provide answers, even if critics and directors can take those questions and answer them provisionally, contingently and incompletely, and in ways that can elucidate what the options are and why the questions are significant.

Important work by Brian Cummings examining the close relationship between early modern religious deliberation and the grammar of linguistic articulation, has allowed us to see more thoroughly how the developments in theology consequently affected the period's literature.[6] Ground-breaking denominational studies by literary scholars including Debora Shuger, Jean-Christophe Mayer, Alison Shell and Gillian Woods, as well as historians like Eamon Duffy, Felicity Heal and Peter Marshall, have thrown new light on the lay experience of religion in the pre- and post-Reformation periods, along with their literary expression.[7] Work such as this has permitted a more nuanced discernment of the polychromatic and crossbreed character of post-Reformation belief, where denominational variation was intricate and ingrained, and where palimpsest attempts to conceal or disremember the past could not be absolute. The Elizabethan religious settlement was a patchwork of faiths: new and old; legal and banned; transient and residual. Official divisions and sectarian polemics created a dichotomy, whilst legislative attempts (theoretically self-conscious or not) to obscure and confuse distinctions persisted, often in the hope of acquiring common support. Critical approaches have often tended to reproduce only the religious binaries of the age, without paying sufficient attention to these blurred boundaries that represented the hybridized faith of most people. The critical test this period poses is the necessity to be attentive to both the immoderations of belief and their mixture. Part of this is a recognition that the new is much more conspicuous than 'the old or the accustomed; but that does not mean that what already existed ceased to matter. Humanists were superb self-publicists and it is easy to accept at face value their claims to their own originality.'[8]

---

[4] Debora Shuger, 'Subversive fathers and suffering subjects: Shakespeare and Christianity', in Donna Hamilton and Richard Strier, eds, *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 46.

[5] Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 58.

[6] Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[7] Debora Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (1990; Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997); Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in 'Measure for Measure'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion and the Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (1992; Yale: Yale University Press, 2005 new edn.); Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[8] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Publishing, 2010), p. 2.

As we will see, religious difference impinges upon Shakespearean drama as a usually supplementary wellspring of semantic, epistemological or thematic pressures and doubts, intensifying the need for dramatic resolution even as it makes it more awkward – and frequently impossible – to achieve. Yet, even as religion has been revisited and repositioned in the cultural research of the early modern period, it has still often been oddly over- or under-stressed, particularly in relation to the social procedures that theatre affects and influences. The early modern stage and its characters' words are not simply an echo of its world: C.L. Barber, Louis Montrose and, perhaps most prominently, Stephen Greenblatt, have all claimed them to be a proxy for an unsound and ineffective ecclesiastical inheritance. The evolution of the drama from the medieval mystery or morality play to the commercialized, profitable theatre of the later sixteenth century, with its impressive accomplishments (financially and aesthetically), is here understood to derive from its aptitude in operating as a kind of compensation and restorative for the deteriorating and diminishing Church (although whether it can be said to serve, in Regina Mara Schwartz's sanguine phrase, as 'the first truly Reformed Church'[9] remains uncertain).

Greenblatt's 2001 work, *Hamlet in Purgatory*,[10] sees the Dane's play as voicing an abhorrence to a given physicality but yearning for it at the same time, trapped amid the material Catholic culture of death and the reforming beliefs in the permanent pervasiveness of the spirit. It has been routine amongst commentators to see Greenblatt's work as forming a vital part of the so-called 'religious turn' in Shakespearean criticism, and whilst it is certainly true he gives prominence to religious matters he does so in order to inaugurate a dichotomy between the ritual beliefs in purgatory and their succeeding decline into secularism. Greenblatt argues for the theatre filling the emotional void created by the Reformation's transition from the mellifluous and material medieval familiarity to a more detached and symbolic province: the secular stage now stands in the space once occupied by Purgatory and its associated beliefs. For Greenblatt, the Shakespearean theatre is what is residual when the core of religious belief is eradicated, becoming in effect a deconsecrated holy place. Religious rituals are seen to become meaningless, emptied out of true significance and no longer holding value for the enactors. Whether the theatre can be seen as an appropriate or adequate replacement for the church is acutely problematic: Greenblatt requires the stage to be wholly secular in order to fulfil the roles and expectations of religion.

As a theory, secularization has now ceased to dominate socio-cultural undertakings: the role, purpose and influence of religion have not only resurfaced in recent years, but appropriate retrospective examination has seen religious attitudes not to have receded to the extent claimed. Criticism such as Greenblatt's, however, remains informed by the idea of disenchantment suggesting that the so-called 'religious turn' of recent literary criticism is only a fresh account of the same secularization. Yet drama, as we will see, manifests the collision and collusion of the religious and secular affinities of this era, removing the boundary between them and problematizing this false dichotomy. The implications of this are powerful, because it threatens to misconstrue the reforming ideas, as well as those it is presumed them to surpass. The intersected nature of religion to all other facets of existence in this period entails that we can perceive the Reformation's bearing across a number of considerations that might not at first sight seem either religious or related to religious affairs.

---

[9] Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 42.

[10] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001; Expanded edn. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

This thesis focuses on the religious drives and different religious traditions that appear to stimulate the plays. It will see Shakespeare through these dramas responding to and discussing the Reformation not merely as a theological issue, but as a cultural/ historical occurrence with momentous and enduring repercussions for governing authority, everyday activities and personal identity: nations were divided, as were friends and families, even individuals against themselves. Within such conditions new kinds of piety, philosophical innovation, and literary creativity thrived, and Shakespeare took full advantage to give voice (through a crowd of people and perspectives) many of the varied and often contradictory currents of religious thought that were circulating. This thesis does not aim at a historical survey of the religious culture in the later part of Shakespeare's career, using literature to study either history or religion – Shakespeare's dramas can powerfully illustrate aspects of both, but should not be regarded as a satisfactory foundation for such an endeavour. Instead, this thesis seeks to further elucidate our appreciation of these three tragicomic plays through recognition of the position of the Reformation in early seventeenth century culture. The motivation remains a literary one, seeking the creative and aesthetic utility of the Reformation in the drama, though with a due acknowledgment of the necessary historical and theological enquiries such a task engages. It will seek to explore how Shakespeare employs his literary inheritance to forge a complex and heterogeneous form, making use of the paradoxes and fluidities of faith, genre, style, sexuality, geography and chronology in order less to negate adversarial positions, but rather to indicate outside and beyond the boundaries of doctrine, gender and generation.

The critical religious turn in Shakespearean and early modern studies has correctly sought to place compositions within their historical framework, with a view to revitalising the relevant confessional concerns of the period, but if a fully-realised understanding of early modern literature necessitates an interdisciplinary methodology, it must nevertheless preserve not only an attention to disciplinary frontiers and limitations, but also stay predominantly focused on literary purposes, processes, and techniques.

Part of the difficulty is that modernity, with its deceptively more individualised picture of consciousness, has its own version of what 'religion' is, habitually viewing it as a hermetically sealed and private set of personal beliefs, a compartment of one's life, rather than as the pervasive and inclusive totality of one's existence that it emphatically was in the early modern period. In Shakespeare's day, religion was part of the wider communications of people's everyday lives, a measurement of their involvement in structures beyond both themselves and their lifetime. Indeed, it will be essential throughout this thesis to regard the distinction between sacred and secular as being very different from our own: it was a division constantly to be negotiated, discussed and interpreted. In this period religious concerns, power politics, communal and individual life continually intersected and overlapped, as Shakespeare observed whether directly or not in his plays.

If Greenblatt has underplayed religion in post-Reformation early modern culture, in part due to a binary and insular model of what religion is, so that 'reformed religion was simply secularism by a more palatable name',[11] what of its overstressing? There persists the problem of examining how authors transmute theology into literary modes and this is an area with a relatively embryonic methodological apparatus in literary criticism, notwithstanding the surge in recent interest with 'Shakespeare and religion'. Sympathetic to the doctrinal intricacies of the age, many re-examinations of the relationship between early modern

---

[11] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 6

writers and religion have tended to shrink the issue to the biographic question of whether playwrights such as Shakespeare were 'Catholic'/ 'Protestant'.[12] Thus, many scholars have undertaken to speculate about the dire conciliations of private adherence to publically proscribed beliefs that might have concerned Shakespeare, and are traceable in his works.[13]

Such approaches correctly underscore the unavoidable religious frictions of the period, but have a constrained usefulness. Gillian Woods notes the 'reductively circular logic' in many of the biographical methodologies relating to Shakespeare and religion:

> A lack of evidence is translated as evidence (the prudent Catholic Shakespeare necessarily hides his faith; his silence signals his commitment); alternatively (or in addition) read in a particular way, decontextualized aspects of Shakespeare's texts supposedly yield biographical information that simultaneously corroborates that Catholic literary analysis.[14]

Thus, other religious approaches have sought to establish elaborate and furtive religious interpretations of the plays. Clare Asquith's *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (2005),[15] is a precarious and conjectured attempt to commandeer the plays, not only to uncover Shakespeare's personal faith, but also to imagine the works as encoding Catholic rebellion within Protestant England. Whilst this work (and others)[16] has done precious service in disclosing much of the Catholic material (images and idioms) in the dramas, the habitual procedure undertaken has far too slender and absolute a focus on purely doctrinal prospect, so that a stealthy authorial intention and sectarian agenda suffocate not only the potential ambiguity and equivocation of such images/ idioms, but also their specific (and problematizing) literary-dramatic circumstances. As we will see, Shakespeare's spirited carriage with religious vocabularies and conceptions is usually done so 'analogically, with further complications of context and speaker.'[17] More spacious and compound dynamics within a drama should not be smoothed over by constrictive and tendentious doctrinal-sectarian readings that seem to want add 'some glamour and mystery to the otherwise unremarkable recorded life of the man from Stratford by positing a perilous and carefully concealed Catholicism'.[18] Nebulous metaphoric imaginations with implicit and veiled sectarian lexicons certainly seem to ignore external factors regarding the marginal number of 'determined Catholics' within these theatre audiences and internal ones vis-à-vis the meaning and direction of the play actually being presented. (The repeatedly contradictory

---

[12] These are, for the most part, convenient terms to use, signalling broad common groupings, even if a homogeneous identity was almost impossible to pinpoint in this period. We will see how vocabulary such as 'papist', 'recusant', 'reformer' and 'Catholic' itself meant many diverse and often opposite or contradictory things to different people.

[13] Gary Taylor, 'Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton', *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1994), pp. 283-314; Gary Taylor, 'The Cultural Politics of Maybe', in Dutton, Findlay & Wilson, eds, *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004).

[14] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 7.

[15] Clare Asquith, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (London: Perseus Books, 2005).

[16] Cf. Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); David N. Beauregard, *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

[17] Antony Low, Review of Maurice Hunt's *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness, Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.3 (2006), p. 360.

[18] Anne Barton, 'The One and Only', *The New York Review of Books*, 11th May 2006.

and conflictive sectarian analyses of the same single play by two different authors such as Asquith and Richard Wilson show up the constraints of such an approach, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to these same works intrinsic breadth of potential meaning.) This is not to suggest that such readings are not inventive or thought-provoking *per se* — they can often raise interesting and diverting details — but their intransigence and agenda-driven certitude necessitate picking, choosing, twisting or plain ignoring of identical words or vital dramatic facets in order to maintain their convoluted argument.

Readings founded on essentially biographical methodologies can retain value if they are not predicated upon epagogic reasoning or extravagantly encoded meanings, so that awareness of a dramatist's respective (and potentially changing) beliefs have the capability to augment our consideration of their oeuvre; but we need to ask if — devoid of persuasive documentary substantiation — this is a beneficial ambition of literary studies. If Shakespeare himself is surreptitiously Catholic, latently Catholic, indifferently Catholic, or even anti-Catholic, as a playwright his dramas sanction him to be all or none of these things through his characters and the words and worlds they exhibit and inhabit. Moreover, even if compelling external verification came to light 'confirming' what people wish to see as Shakespeare's personal 'Catholicism', would this radically alter critical analysis of his work, unless it necessitated us speciously generating a Catholic Shakespeare producing Catholic Drama (and all the enigmatic, encoded complications this would entail in post-Reformation England)? Authorial intention and biography are not invalid constituents to literary criticism, but they can only have peripheral or passing significance. It is problematical to imagine what form hard evidence might take — a signed confession is scarcely proof in an age of enforced affirmations. The most likely prospects of Shakespearean faith remain speculative, a buttressing of substantiation from the period and the plays until the burden of proof proceeds beyond fluke. Moreover, conjecture can illuminate to show us new things, or the same things more clearly.

The degree to which Shakespeare had in fact been committed to the old faith is, as we've noted, problematical to establish, because nearly all the evidence, including most of the internal literary evidence, can be interpreted in opposing ways. Shakespeare's eschewal of boorish anti-Catholic ridicule in his plays can be seen as either signalling a circumspect apathy or a principled fortitude not to sanction caricature in opposition to religious formations important to him. A further perhaps more conceivable reason is Shakespeare's aspiration to broaden his plays' attraction to the widest possible audience, including upper-class Catholics. Thus the nuns and friars in *Measure for Measure, Much Ado About Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet* convey a more impartial stance on the faith than the antagonistic religious typecasts found in many other contemporary plays: Barnabe Barnes's *The Divels Charter* (c.1607) concerns the malicious intrigues of the notorious 15th Century Pope Alexander VI; John Webster's *The White Devil* (c.1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (c.1612-13) express his vision of a contaminated world controlled by the Catholic Church.[19] Nonetheless, as Jean-Christophe Mayer has seen in *King John*, Shakespeare is not afraid to dissect the processes of anti-Catholicism, even as he is careful in not taking sides himself.[20]

Furthermore, religion functions as a commodious scaffold for the more diminutive intervening spaces which contain most individual's faith; religious doctrine prescribes tenets

---

[19] See: Arthur F. Marotti, ed., *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 33.
[20] Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion and the Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

and dogma for people's credences and activities, and individuals tend to observe these in their own particular way (shaped by an array of factors accommodating but not limited to the law, education, upbringing and circumstance). In the post-Reformation period this was amplified so that, 'except for a small minority at one doctrinal extreme or other, those labels [Catholic or Protestant] failed to capture the layered nature of what Elizabethans, from the Queen down, actually believed.'[21] Thus, almost all religious belief is complex, ambiguous and subject to fluctuation and adjustment. When we attempt to locate absolute personal faith via literary texts that are themselves complex and ambiguous in their engagement with religion, we can only expect to be unsuccessful. We can, however, scrutinize that ambiguity in order to enrich our appreciation of the plays.

An interesting and significant adjunct to issues of religiously biographical interpretation is the debate over collaboration and co-authorship – not least as more collaboration is continually to be located in Shakespeare's plays and, as we shall see, because interrogations regarding Shakespeare's absolute authorship of the works attributed to him echo some of the broader concerns of origin in the period. If, at present, scholarship sees around a quarter of Shakespeare's traditionally canonical plays containing elements by other writers – with different forms of collaboration on hand: a joint enterprise from the start (*Timon of Athens*); later revisions (*Macbeth*; *Measure for Measure*); master-apprentice style relationships (the *Henry VI* plays*; Titus Andronicus*), and so on – this is an active and heated area of contemporary research that will likely only increase an underestimated figure.[22] The state of the canon – and our potential interpretations of it biographically – is in flux.

Studies and theories of collaboration and attribution, like other movements in cultural criticism, tend to be based on cultural/ critical desires for what we want to be true at any particular time, as well as making use of modern or fashionable apparatuses and methodologies. So quasi-scientific authorship studies utilizing specialist linguistic-textual analysis, with computer-generated arithmetical charts, tend to be already looking for what they intend to find, as well as reflect our technologically-preoccupied time. In our age especially we commend the principles of teamwork and collective internet-based projects; we appreciate large-scale commercial entertainments and tend to mistrust the notion of an individual genius. All of these factors coalesce to make early twenty-first century Shakespeare more collaborative than a late nineteenth or mid-twentieth century one. The matter is likely to fluctuate back again, yet collaborative methodologies of Shakespeare have new and interesting things to say of him as a writer, including curtailing or proscribing overtly religious biographical interpretations.

Recognizing a work as collaborative – as with the designation 'early' – has often become a form of shorthand for negative, evaluative associations: a means of pardoning purportedly objectionable elements (the burlesque violence of *Titus Andronicus)*[23] or ways in which it is alleged to have failed aesthetically (the abrupt ending to *Timon of Athens)*[24]. In this view, value and authorship went together – there was an assumption that Shakespeare was 'good', so if a play wasn't, then it couldn't have been by him. This logic could function the

---

[21] James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. 167

[22] Jonathan Hope, *Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Socio-linguistic Study* (1994; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008); Peter Kirwan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha: Negotiating the Boundaries of the Dramatic Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Gary Taylor & Gabriel Egan, eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[23] A ferocity surely justified by the context, setting and subject matter of the play. See: Jonathan Bate, ed., 'Origins – Authorship' in *Titus Andronicus* (London: A & C Black, 1995), pp. 79-83.

[24] An abruptness that in point of fact attests the play's exploration of excess, deflation and anti-climax.

other way as well: if a play was later rehabilitated and deemed to be 'good', the work could be now regarded as exclusively by the 'lone virtuoso' Shakespeare, and not partially/ wholly the work of mediocre others, a reasoning that held aesthetic quality and collaboration could not be regarded simultaneously.[25] The supposed roughness or unsubtlety of *Titus* reflects critical movements theorizing teleological narratives of progress, the idea that over time literature gets more and more complex or sophisticated. Clearly this is both untrue and misguided: complex and sophisticated can be, but are not automatically, positive aesthetic terms. There is often a relatively unexamined critical lexis of aesthetic value in which unsubtlety can only be bad, less good than, and a failure to realize, subtlety. For the Renaissance period, this seems principally consequent on later interpretations of Shakespeare, then applied to his contemporaries (and co-authors) in a formulation which is intended to make Shakespeare seem superior and therefore to forever find them deficient. The professed unsubtlety of *Titus*, or the Wilkins-authored first two acts of *Pericles*, in fact proclaim their own distinction and functionality: audacious, emotionally outsized dramas concerned with copious passions, actions and events. They are not unsuccessful interior, psychological enquiries. It is a measure of the distortion our emphasis on Shakespeare has placed on Renaissance drama that, for example, the contemplative pentameters of Hamlet's extended soliloquies have come to appear the quintessence of believable dramatic psychology, even as we know that communicating in such a way is exactly what no person would do.

There has been a clear need to move beyond simply justifying 'not liking' a play through identifying it as a product of collaboration (saying we don't like play 'x' because it is 'not very good', and that it is 'not very good' because it is collaborative) and come to see that partnership was the prevailing creative custom of the early modern theatre. For the most part dramas in this period are co-authored, and scholarship is now developing past perceiving the result of that procedure as perpetually disjointed, incoherent, aesthetically divided, or simply unfinished.

One way to think of collaboration is to place at the centre of the analysis continuities or ruptures – structural, linguistic, ideological – and to make these divergences the dynamic for interpreting the play, as well as being the evidence for dual authorship. Thus, a key area in which collaboration can be detected – alongside linguistic issues of verb form, syntax and so forth – is perceived ideological variance, and the potential to include religious divergence. In *Timon of Athens*, areas regarded as being by Thomas Middleton[26] are inclined to conceptualise the play's standpoint on money around the word 'debt' – an economic association between people, that is to say an interactive, relational understanding of money. For the postulated Shakespearean parts of *Timon*, the decisive noun for money is 'gold' – a *thing*, a potential prop on the stage, but also embracing more mythical and magical, less blatantly monetary, connotations.[27] *Timon* is structured around an echo – so that the first half

[25] For an example of this type of reasoning, where authorship and value judgments are inseparable, see: Doreen DelVecchio & Antony Hammond, eds, 'Authorship' in *Pericles* (Cambridge: New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1998), pp. 8-14. The editors argue the play is not collaborative *because* it is good: it is cohesive, erudite and capable of efficacious performance. The negative associations of collaboration are thus confirmed.

[26] See: John Jowett, ed., 'A Divided Play – Middleton's Hand – Shakespeare and Middleton' in *The Oxford Shakespeare: Timon of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 132-154. Cf. Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton, eds, 'The question of collaboration' in *Timon of Athens* (London: Cengage Learning, 2008), pp. 1-10.

[27] Jowett, *Timon*, pp. 45-56. Cf. John Jowett, 'Middleton and Debt in *Timon of Athens*' in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare*, ed., Linda Woodbridge (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 2003), pp. 219-35.

Timon has him in the city, the second Timon in the woods; the first part is philanthropic, the second misanthropic. It is structurally a dual/ divided play that resonates with disunion – however, this is not itself a partition that maps onto the the division of labour between the two dramatists (such as a charitable Middleton and cynical, pessimistic Shakespeare).

Fletcher and Shakespeare's co-authored play *Henry VIII* (1613, and initially titled *All is True*), takes the origins of the Henrician Reformation as its subject matter and raises interpretative questions if we momentarily acknowledge the assertion that Shakespeare was a recusant Catholic, and then note the Protestant allegiances of his writing partner. Fletcher 'wrote no apocalyptic allegories, no political pamphlets', but his numerous plays exhibit 'an uneasy and rather unpredictable engagement with political and theological issues.'[28] The play's engagement with Jacobean politics has stimulated many to regard it as a Protestant propaganda play – 'reflect[ing] the Foxian apocalyptic view of English history'.[29] William Baillie, scrutinizing a succession of contemporary themes in the play with conspicuous meanings for radical Protestants, sees the depiction of 'the expansion of the monarch's personal authority in relation to the law, the sudden fall of a court favourite, and a divorce'[30] as signs that the play was intentionally attending Protestant attitudes to current affairs. Such as argument is for the most part persuasive, even if *Henry VIII* has further complexities within it, not least concerning the play's cross-examination of its own historicity and interrogation of the nature of 'truth', the subject of so many of the intense ideological labours of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In an apocalyptic framework Cranmer, at the play's close, and after the tribulations it has presented, bestows the infant Elizabeth as the incarnation of Truth, a prophecy to break the cycle of history and violence. Even the arch-Catholic, Stephen Gardiner (incarcerated under Edward VI as an enemy to Protestantism and liberated in order to crown Mary in 1553), with considerable irony, is provided with lines that 'unwittingly acknowledge the revelatory conjunction of Time and Truth embodied in the royal baby.'[31]

Furthermore, as we shall see, issues such as Gower's manifestation as chorus in *Pericles*, and the discussions of theological matters in this play and elsewhere, impel authorship interrogations away from the discipline of attribution and more in the direction of intertextuality models, which recognize the interrelatedness of *all* texts – 'the text', as Barthes declared in *The Death of the Author*, 'is a tissue of citations' drawn from 'the innumerable centres of culture'.[32] Considering Shakespeare within a network of interconnected texts, both his own sources and his products as the cause of other cultural phenomena – such as Wilkins's subsequent novelised rendering of *Pericles* – decentres individual authorship perhaps more effectively than attempting to dissever a play into its constituent collaborators.

This excursus points to the need to interrogate further, and perhaps invalidate, certain biographic interpretations of drama, particularly in matters of religion. We need to be cautious of proclaiming Shakespeare's faith as a matter of 'historical fact' since this can too easily occasion in a 'determinism limiting rather than expanding our understanding of his works' ability to comment on the times they were written in.'[33] The precise dissection and

---

[28] Gordon McMullan, ed., 'All is true: Truth and topicality', in *Henry VIII* (London: A & C Black, 2000), p. 65n.

[29] Frances Yates, *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 70.

[30] William Baillie, '*Henry VIII*: A Jacobean History', *Shakespeare Studies* 2 (1979), p. 248.

[31] McMullan, *Henry VIII*, p. 70n. Cf. V.i.20-2: 'The fruit she goes with / I pray for heartily, that it may find / Good time, and live.'

[32] Roland Barthes, '*La mort de l'auteur*', in *Image Music Text* (1977; Fontana Press, 1993), p. 54.

[33] Andrew James Johnston, 'Sailing the Seas of Literary History: Gower, Chaucer, and the Problem of Incest in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', in *Poetica* 41, No. 3/4 (2009), p. 381.

ascription of collaboratively authored plays, and any associated ideological standpoints, are likely to be extremely difficult to detect with any degree of certainty, especially in the absence of reliable, attested proof. They do, however, help us guard against the notion of a single author fostering a particular (religious or otherwise) agenda. A group or pair of writers might share a similar outlook, but co-authorship rigorously disrupts strongly biographic readings. Moreover, as we shall see, questions over Shakespeare's complete authorship of 'his' plays, resonate with some of the themes of the plays – in *Pericles*, parentage and isolation – as well as wider socio-religious concerns of provenance and identity.

The primary impetus behind early modern dramaturgy, and the development of drama as the dominant mode of this period, is not autobiographic expression but rhetorical argumentation, and the need to inhabit both sides of the question. At the core of this classical and humanist technique are methods for reasoning *in utramque partem* – the ability to occupy either side on whichever debatable matter was put forward, stemming from the supposition that there are scarce contentious subjects that can be resolved by merely aggregating the particulars for and against. Rather, a shrewd and judicious manoeuvring of evidence and corroborated by an arrangement of convincing strategies, calculated to assemble a credible rationale.[34] Literature of this era does not have the disclosure of the writer's innermost beliefs or sensitivities at its decipherable centre, and perhaps drama even less so because it is contingent on largely making different voices and diverse people proportionately deserving and evenly interesting – as distinguished from a solitary narrative consciousness we might locate in a realist novel.

We cannot discount the contribution that recent studies of Shakespeare's religious beliefs have made in bringing responsiveness to the profoundly religious contexts of the dramas we have, and the markedly complex post-Reformation circumstances of their creative milieu. However, narrow over-emphasized religious readings threaten to 'keep Catholic scholarship disconnected from literary appreciation of the plays, effectively consolidating the very marginalization they seek to remedy.'[35] Thus religious approaches need to see religion as inextricably interconnected to the multifarious make-up of early modern culture and personality, voraciously fashioning and participating in the social, sexual and political questions of the day. (Doctrinal readers of Shakespeare's works also need to keep in mind the distance between any supposed pious content in the dramas and the rather different religious/ faith statements — Catholic or Protestant — outside the theatre, for which we have a generous amount of surviving textual material.)

We need to enquire as to whether we are examining the correct model of religion here, one as a personal belief system and practice, when the early modern mind did not conceive of it in this enclosed manner. To see religion as merely a private practice and personal belief system is part of the systematising discrimination of a secular world view.[36] Narrowing our concept of religion like this, consigning it to a cloistered belief system, necessarily contracts what can constitute a 'religious' idea, with the upshot that religiously- and doctrinally-nuanced discussions of politics, psychology, metaphysics, aesthetics, gender and sexuality are frequently disconnected from early modern literary considerations: 'religion' is not a separate category equivalent to 'gender' or 'politics'; it forms the umbrella

---

[34] Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Elizabethan England* (1966; New Edition: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 299-232.
[35] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 9.
[36] Cf. Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 137.

that contains the others.[37] So the existence of porous boundaries between religion and secularism mean that, as Brian Cummings has put it in his *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*, 'the [earlier] assumption of a dialectic between the religious and the secular has to be removed and rethought.'[38]

Knowing this, we do not so easily make assumptions about selfhood and identity emerging only when the Reformation created individualism. Rather, we see the reformations (plural) of the period as part of the persistent mutability and instability of humanity's conceptions of itself. It is through the reinterpretation and re-evaluation of religious ideas (across denominational and chronological divides), not just their deposing, that *homo sapiens* restructure and 'modernize' themselves.

There is a potent reaction to religion and the Reformation in Shakespeare, but the tense link between religion and literature has meant that literary history (rather than Shakespeare himself) has tended in the past to write 'as if the Reformation hadn't happened'.[39] Yet, if Stephen Greenblatt can accurately state that Shakespeare wrote 'scripts that were intensely alert to the social and political realities of their times,'[40] we must also assert that he wrote dramas that were correspondingly tuned in to the religious strains of those times. Moreover, critical approaches to literature, especially in the twentieth century, have tended to demand a choice between religious belief or scepticism/ secularism, revealing their own anachronistic ideological prejudices. *Hamlet* is commonly cited as requiring the philosophical language of atheism (as William Empson suggested) or agnosticism (cf. A.D. Nuttall). The difficulty with such a conditioning is not only the invoking of Shakespeare (or *Hamlet*) as metaphysically exceptional and distinct in both thought and language to everyone else of his time, but also the need to transfer belief into a defined system of creeds, so that what Shakespeare writes is seen as a consequence of fixed, formulaic statements of core tenets corresponding to 'I believe in…' and so on. To do this also removes the requirement to solve the more awkward problem of what belief, or its lack, actually is and how it arises and manifests itself. This cannot be truer than in the period of Shakespeare's writing where the existence of religion was assumed by all and religious beliefs were in a more perpetual state of instability than ever before. Furthermore, both public and private confessions of faith (be it under oath at trial, in personal letters or even through art) were liable to scrutiny and investigation on pain of execution or expulsion.

Shakespeare's culture was a complex fragmentation of official Protestantism, outlawed Catholicism and an elusive, residual faith that clung on indefinably somewhere in between, both obliterated and absorbed: he saw this disintegration as a juncture for imagination and his plays as laboratories for creative discussion. Religious differentiation thus encroaches and interlopes upon Shakespearean drama as an additional principle of linguistic, epistemological and thematic tension and uncertainty, often strengthening the requirement for resolve at the same time as it pressurizes resolution to be more problematic in achievement.

---

[37] Gauri Viswanathan, 'Secularism in the Framework of Heterodoxy', *Modern Language Association* 123:2 (March 2008), p. 475.

[38] Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 13.

[39] A.D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 17.

[40] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 12.

Demonstrative of this is Gillian Woods' revelatory 2013 study *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions.* She effectively contends that there is an unavoidable – and problematical – topicality and contextual allusion to the character names used in *Love's Labour's Lost* (c.1595-7).[41] The historical King of Navarre (later King Henri IV of France from 1589-1610), was the leading Protestant figure in the French Wars of Religion in the 1580s and 90s, 'for a time appeared a very attractive figure to the English',[42] and the success of his Protestant court was frequently cited in Elizabethan liturgy. Navarre then took the politically strategic decision in July 1593 to secure Paris by converting to Catholicism, abjuring his old faith and apocryphally declaring 'Paris vaut bien une messe' ('Paris is well worth a mass').[43] (Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* (1593) – with which *Love's Labour's Lost* could be considered to be in a protracted intertextual negotiation – had already portrayed this chaotic religious violence, concentrating on the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.) The name 'Navarre' was thus connected with oath-breeching in a vicious and sensitive sectarian context, and this suggestive moniker is joined in *Love's Labour's Lost* by several others associated with the religious politics of the period: Berowne for the historical Duc de Biron; Longaville for the Duc de Longueville; Dumaine for the Duc de Mayenne, and so on, are all names with contemporary references and attachments to factual people.[44]

The oath-breaking that is so bracketed with the historical Navarre is one of Shakespeare's play's own dominant thematic concerns – Ferdinand of Navarre undertakes to abnegate women; events straightaway connive to make the honouring of this pledge impossible to achieve. The play reverberates with the repeated words 'vow' (10 occurrences), 'oath' (19), 'swear' (14), and 'break' (20), disclosing a web of allusions that sustain the contravention of an oath at the crux of the drama.[45] This does not suppose that the play is automatically an allegory of religious wars in France, but there is, as Woods makes clear, plainly something happening in this collocation of a stylised and stylish plot with the vehemently political onomastic connections in Shakespeare's characters' names.

Turbulent events in France were scrutinized with much interest in England; a 'substantial pamphlet literature made them and the political thinking behind the French Wars available to English readers.'[46] Yet if the playwright seems to be making reference to contemporary events, writing 'a work of imaginative journalism',[47] his account of it is hardly straightforward and rigorously problematizes these insinuations (for instance, Ferdinand and Dumaine are friends in the fiction, yet Navarre and the Duc de Mayenne were virulent adversaries in history; violent allusions via the dramatis personae in a light comic play, and so on). Woods argues persuasively that 'the centrality of the theatrical Navarre's oath-breaking to an otherwise plotless play … suggests that the topical constellation of names is introduced

---

[41] Gillian Woods, Ch. 2, 'Converting Names in *Love's Labour's Lost*', in *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 58-89.

[42] H. R. Woudhuysen, ed., *Love's Labour's Lost* (London: Thomson Learning, 1998), p. 67.

[43] Alistair Horne, *Seven Ages of Paris: Portrait of a City* (London: Random House, 2003), p. 85. G. de Berthier de Savigny maintains that, in revenge, the Calvinists accredited the phrase to him. *Histoire de France* (1977; Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1999), p. 167.

[44] Woudhuysen, *Love's Labour's Lost*, pp. 67-9; 109-110.

[45] See: John Kerrigan, 'Swearing in Jest: *Love's Labour's Lost*', in *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 67-96.

[46] *Ibid*., p. 68.

[47] Hugh Richmond, 'Shakespeare's Navarre', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 43 (1978-9), p. 214.

precisely *because* of the anxiety created by [Henri IV's] conversion and that it both connects to and illuminates the play's linguistic themes and generic concerns.'[48]

Shakespeare sets us an uncomfortable interpretive difficulty through this troubling disparity between the tone of the names and the language/ action: why have 'feckless romantics leads [been] saddled with names particular to a bloody sectarian conflict'?[49] Woods concludes that Shakespeare is not encoding a religio-political allegory, but reflecting on what constructs and constitutes meaning, the security of connection between names and their referents, words and things. We will see that this as a repeated concern of Shakespearean drama, with repercussions for the unjustified periodization of history and the misleading fluency of teleological progression, confronting the ideological foundations of both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation's accounts of history and its processes.

Shakespeare is alert to a multitude of religious stimuli, whether with his frequent biblical hints and references, his resonances of recent liturgical texts like the Book of Common Prayer (especially with its removal of many customary rituals), or in his ordinary use of familiar religious language: Romeo declares to Juliet 'Call me but love and I'll be new baptized' (II.i.92); Iago recognizes that to the suspicious, trifling things take on the testimony 'of holy writ' (III.iii.327). For comic and parodic purposes characters mimic or deride religious matter (the drunken Trinculo and Stephano in *The Tempest* send up various sacred ceremonies; Falstaff's lively, mock-pious speeches) yet by doing so they paradoxically enforce their very significance for contemporary culture. 'Religious' and 'secular' matters imaginatively intersect, perhaps in many ways rendering both terms meaningless as a distinction, but certainly drawing attention to the volatile and porous partition between the two, 'eschew[ing] a narrative of secularisation that places Shakespeare at its very centre.'[50]

Both Catholic and Protestant traditions are evoked: an internal fertility and ambiguity that, as we have seen, 'makes it difficult for us to pinpoint Shakespeare's own doctrinal allegiances.'[51] The religious topographies of heaven, hell and purgatory are consistently called to mind (and in the case of *Hamlet* form a vital part of the narrative[52]), along with their allied sectarian, eschatological and soteriological concerns. Less ultimate, but equally evocative, are the references to friars, chantries or parish ales, echoing and memorialising supposedly vanished religious atmospheres: 'Shakespeare's drama especially is pervaded with traces of a culture that was theoretically past, but which remained troublingly present.'[53]

Whatever theological ambiguities and crossbreeds this thesis will explore, it is beyond doubt that Christianity dominated Shakespeare's culture and so the term 'secular drama' for his plays is deceptive for it implies something wholly separate from religious drama. Secular drama existed within a wholly religious society: church attendance was ostensibly mandatory and implemented by act of law; any religious adjustment impinged on the whole make-up of

---

[48] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 60. (Italics Woods's own.)

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[50] David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore, eds., *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 8.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[52] The play creatively dramatizes many of the unresolved tensions at the core of the partial English Reformation: remnants of the Catholic liturgy are put together with Protestant theology; Hamlet gives voice to many of the reformed ideas of Luther and Calvin; he is haunted by a ghost ensnared within purgatory, a (ghost) father deprived many of the traditional Catholic practices associated with the death ritual. Cf. Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*

[53] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 1.

society, whether the publically demonstrated faith permissible by contemporary decree, or the clandestine worship of proscribed beliefs.

More than one variety of theology inevitably flows in the plays, not least since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cultivated especially diverse systems of belief. Yet when observing that more established customs continued after the Reformation, there has also been a tendency to focus on the concrete prolongations that are easy to define: practical or material continuations, rather than more indistinct theological issues. What one might suppose to be a foundational Reformed doctrine – belief in divine providence for example – does not entirely differentiate it from the 'traditional' faith in this period.[54] The exact difference between a Calvinist 'special providence' and 'miracle' was often slender; Luther provoked Erasmus to show miracles associated with free will, yet could still argue – in *De servo arbitrio* – that miracles were used to substantiate divine doctrines. Besides this, the *effects* of variant theological positions do not always extensively deviate, so that the tragicomic focus on *endings* allows these plays to span a wider range of religious points of view: theological points of disagreement might be marked, but the upshot of this disagreement may only be a question of emphasis.[55] Shakespeare has a flexibility that encourages hybridity: perspectives appearing traditional can be employed to comment on the more recent, and vice versa, particularly with broad issues relating to fate and salvation.

The Reformation represented a period of incalculable loss to many – in both material and spiritual terms. Tragicomedy, the genre of this thesis's three principal dramas, then seems the ideal form for mercurial fantasies about remorse and recovery from loss, and the self-actualising of the latent potential in humanity. If the tragedies show us the full burden of history, of humanity trampled by 'The weight of this sad time',[56] the demolition of potential by actual, the tragicomedies reverse this by expressing, as Kiernan Ryan has suggested, 'the triumph of benevolent human desires over the harsh constraints of human actuality.'[57] The tragicomedies take up a shattered mantle of death to create anew. At the beginning of Act IV of *The Winter's Tale* Time appears personified:

> Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
> To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage that I slide
> O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom. 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 do
> To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale
> The glistering of this present as my tale

---

[54] Cf. Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion and the Stage* (London: Palgrave Early Modern Literature in History, 2006).

[55] Angus Fletcher, '*Doctor Faustus* and the Lutheran Aesthetic', *English Literary Renaissance* 35 (2005), pp. 187-209.

[56] *King Lear*, V.iii.324.

[57] Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 106.

<div align="center">Now seems to it.[58]</div>

<div align="right">(*The Winter's Tale*, IV.i.3-15)</div>

'Use my wings': Time's speech reveals the way the tragicomedies discuss the Reformation's sense of estrangement, disorientation and – ultimately – historical change: 'what is now receiv'd' can be exposed as simply 'custom'; any certainty in a 'glistering present' can be swiftly made 'stale'. Time distances the dramas in both age and place, and invites our cooperation and conceit.

The tragicomedies alert us to the harmony that can come with absolution (whether, as we shall see, by returning to the status quo or disrupting it). Sarah Beckwith's *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (2011) examines how the playwright's tragicomedies written in the 'post-tragic' period represent a new language of forgiveness, as a response to the denying of the sacrament of penance (and the necessity of confession/ absolution) by the reformers. For Beckwith, Shakespeare's late tragicomedies forge a new 'grammar of forgiveness' from this crisis. She argues for the disclosing force of commonplace words, seeing Shakespeare's tragicomedies as providing a distinct description of the connection between the inherited ritual languages of the Middle Ages and their change in post-Reformation England. Doing so, she argues, will allow us to avoid the pitfalls of periodisation, and see both theatre and language as extended beyond mere representation, and as real events in the world.

For Beckwith, language is fundamental to human relations and given the continual disruptions of the Reformation period, where ancient rituals could be eradicated by a word, or restored with the same, 'the relation of word to world has to be established and re-established through our own voicing of it.'[59] Beckwith aligns herself closely to Stanley Cavell's exploration of Shakespeare's tragedies,[60] arguing the tragicomedies themselves must acknowledge the failure of the tragedies in overcoming the acknowledgement of sin, and provide a new grammar of forgiveness therein.

Here Beckwith's approach seems perhaps too forced – fundamentally, she requires that the tragedies need to be resolved, that they arise from the religious doubts of the period and demonstrate the inadequacy of grounding interpersonal relations within a metaphysical system. We might acknowledge this inadequacy, but it does not follow that without a secure methodological system we or Shakespeare's plays are ontologically or ethically bereft, that we are 'unresolved'. Or, indeed, that Shakespeare was intent on displaying how a post-metaphysical (i.e. secular) system was necessary.

Furthermore, a notion of the 'resolving power' of the tragicomedies seems to require not only an extremely linear development of Shakespeare's thought, but also a somewhat distorted view of both the tragedies and tragicomedies: the former as being too austere, partial or morally insolvent, as works necessarily signifying the playwright's despair over existence or spiritual revolution; the latter as dramas of absolving perfection. Indeed, sometimes her reading of the tragicomedies is close to the secularising narrative of Stephen Greenblatt, though more in terms of ethics than spectacle.

---

[58] As John Pitcher has pointed out, the rhymed couplets of Time's complete speech – sixteen in all, one each for the passing years since the end of Act III – are unique to the play and stress Time's separation from the narrative's events. Cf. *The Winter's Tale*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 244n.

[59] Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 5.

[60] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

More than this, however, the tragicomedies themselves do not neatly fit Beckwith's requirements in terms of resolution. In *Pericles*, Pericles and Marina recover their ability to communicate through language, and like Lear/Cordelia are to an extent redeemed, but Pericles' restoration seems to silence Marina as well as persisting the incestuous risk (his language is full of allusion and metaphor; her impending husband's morally dubious history means the incest threat cannot be wholly eradicated). Equally, the final scene of *Cymbeline* is a complex tangle of unresolved behaviour and stunted contrition, though for Beckwith it 'redeem[s] language itself.'[61] In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes' redemption fits Beckwith's argument more persuasively: he can only see and be restored to Hermione, and build his new identity, when he acknowledges his guilt and redeems its memory. Though for Beckwith *The Tempest* fits her model of forging a new grammar of forgiveness (as the sinners pardon each other through mutual acknowledgements – though, arguably, this in fact comes from the 'Mercy itself' of the Epilogue), the removal at the end to Milan for her leaves a sense of disappointment in the return to reality.

Beckwith's historical approach and its relevance for modern ethics is coherent to a degree, but by seeking a vocational phase where Shakespeare will 'resolve' into a 'grammar of forgiveness' both his previous play's and the period's isolation and ambiguities, Beckwith has to require Shakespeare to not only be working to a somewhat strict career agenda, but also have a form of ethical schedule for each of these plays. This sets a high bar of success (in terms of resolution) the plays do not and cannot meet. Beckwith minimises the tragicomedies' complexity by seeking the perfected embodiment of a 'renewed possibility of a mutual acknowledgment', but there is value in her argument that they can afford us a 'nuanced and precise account ... of the relation between the inherited ritual languages of the Middle Ages and their transformation in post-Reformation England.'[62]

More universal and less doctrinally defined religious concepts and imagery are commonplace in Shakespeare, even the elements of dramatic expression: evil, sin, and the burdens of guilt delineate characters, as do their toiling with regret, remorse and the liberating potentiality of exculpation. There is a marked atmosphere of evil in *Macbeth*, and to a certain extent because of this it also contains '[Shakespeare's] most insistent religious language.'[63] An efficient morality play, *Macbeth* is theologically and chronologically ambiguous, with the central character's commitment to evil causing a painful suffering that engages both our sympathy and complicity.[64] Macbeth's prior and immediate realisation, 'that through the deed [of Duncan's murder] he has irrevocably corrupted a sacramental part of his innermost self'[65] is the absolute exhibition of the moral vastness and theo-cosmological weight of the play. Macbeth 'convert[s] what is to be done into what is already done',[66] in a manner that recalls the fusing of historic time with future time in the Gospel narratives of the New Testament and the Apocalyptic language of the Calvinist Reformation.[67] Only with Macbeth's death can there be emancipation from the tyranny of chaotic time/ moral

---

[61] Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, p. 125.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 6 & pp. 7-8.

[63] John Stachniewski, 'Calvinist psychology in *Macbeth*', *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988), pp. 169-89.

[64] Time – especially its enslaving traits and association with conscience and consciousness – is a prevailing feature (and threat) of the play from the opening question 'When shall we three meet again?' (I.i.1) onwards. Cf. Sandra Clark, '*Macbeth* and Time', in *Macbeth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 62-81.

[65] Sandra Clark, ed., *Macbeth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 3.

[66] Wylie Sypher, *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (Seabury Press New York, 1978), p. 101.

[67] cf. *Macbeth*, I.iii.129-144; I.vii.1-28; V.v.16-27.

confusion and a restitution of temporal and moral order: 'the time is free' says Macduff (ironically 'the man who owes his life to an accident of time, being "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb'[68]), and Malcolm determines himself as king with a sequence of cautious acts, 'in measure, time and place.' (V.ix.39)

The plays also show us spiritual manifestations – resurrections, wonders, and the idea of 'faith' itself – in terms of a potent figurative language and theatrical illusion: as Richard McCoy has asserted, for Shakespeare 'faith' was habitually a metaphor for human expectations and promise within less narrowly defined precepts than standard religious terminology.[69] McCoy asserts that in Shakespearean drama 'faith' can best be regarded as secular and poetic rather than a solely religious occurrence. He makes a return to Romantic period observations, especially Coleridge's 'suspension of disbelief' and his theory of 'poetic faith.' Bearing in mind current criticism on Shakespeare and religion, McCoy argues Shakespeare's early comedies disarmed and captivated both audiences' possible scepticism and the notion of the theatre itself by recognizing their illusory characteristics while stressing the strength of those illusions. He sees the religious language in later plays as necessarily secularized to call attention to the influence of individual imagination and theatrical illusion in general.

Yet, it is more complex and nuanced than metaphor. It is true that unlike Spenser, Donne or Milton, Shakespeare is not a 'religious writer', in the sense that one can ascertain his dedication and commitment to a particular sectarian cause or theological position on a specific doctrine. David Scott Kastan in a recent study identifies elements in Shakespeare of what William James would come to regard as a 'will to believe'. This concept, with its mixture of 'fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our cast and set',[70] seems to inform much of the religious experience of the early modern period, and is observable in the understanding of religion as it registers in Shakespeare. However, for James, as Kastan argues, the *inner* experience of religion was primary, and 'valued more highly than religious life, which is social and, for him, derivative.'[71] Yet James failed to recognize that the very inward aspects he favoured are themselves the result of a sanctioned social diffusion, a diffusion given remarkable prominence in post-Reformation England, where conflict-ridden confessionalism was a perpetual aspect of cultural debate and social reality that could never be an established or background supposition.

The reality of God as a metaphysical question had not yet arisen to the extent that atheism or even agnosticism was a significant group (though, as we shall see, it was a nascent issue) and concerns tended towards what was expected of believers in order to inherit salvation, rather than whether God existed at all. Thus, religion played the central role in creating and systematizing the epistemological foundations of life and maintaining the very framework of society. Although, as Julia Lupton has pointed out in her essay on the religious turn in Shakespeare studies, 'religion is not identical with culture',[72] religion is habitually experienced both as culture and belief as personalities distinguish a range of social customs and attachments and, whether knowingly or not, take on particular intellectual forms and

---

[68] Sandra Clark, *Macbeth*, p. 69.

[69] Richard C. McCoy, *Faith in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[70] William James, 'The Will to Believe', collected in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1896; repr. Dover Publications, 2003), p. 9.

[71] David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 2.

[72] Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies', *English Language Notes* 44 (Spring 2006), pp. 142-149.

routines (that a religious affinity may promote or proscribe) in conjunction with the typical requisites and articles of faith.

For all this pervasiveness in the culture in which Shakespeare wrote, religion has not been regarded as significant to his works in the way it has been for, as I have said, Spenser, Donne or Milton, where a commitment to and concern for religious discussion has always been regarded as central to their verse's value, meaning and ideology. Yet the elevation of Shakespeare to a creative (secularly divine) force in an arena of innumerable confessional options – whilst rigorously expressing his indisputable magnitude as a cultural influence – has acted to erroneously mythologize him and simultaneously give the wrong impression about the discursive characteristics of the religious language and concerns in the plays. Secularism is not in opposition to religion, but is a chronological progression from a culture where belief in God is uncontested and straightforward to, as Charles Taylor has said, 'one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.'[73] Seen in this way, one appreciates why applying such terminology to Shakespearean drama is both awkward and misleading.

To regard Shakespeare as in some way a theatrical theologian as, say, Northrop Frye, G. Wilson Knight, Sarah Beckwith or Piero Boitani have done, can miss the nuance of his attainment. Boitani has recently regarded the four tragicomedies as being 'where the themes of transcendence, immanence, the role of the deity, resurrection, and epiphany are openly, if often obliquely, staged.'[74] It is the differentiation between 'openly' and 'obliquely' that characterizes the Shakespearean methodology, though not in the evangelical manner Boitani envisages. Shakespeare's 'world' is very much one where religion is prominent; yet religion is not merely part of the basic material to be turned by aesthetic resolve into dramatic art. Nor, too, is it simply background shading for effect: it has a more elementary and refractory role. Godly presence is not the subject of the plays, but they assume it to be there, and it fosters the expression of their assessment and awareness of the world. *King Lear* arguably provides a blunt challenge to this concept of divine immanence (the play is set in a pre-Christian age), and the 'widespread religious perception in early modern England that God's hand was directly and assiduously at work in the world, constantly intervening in human affairs.'[75] By choosing to set his play in a pre-Christian Britain, Shakespeare permits an altogether more explicitly sceptical approach to Christian belief systems.

The language of religion extends throughout Shakespeare's career and across genre and setting. Even in the early classical tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (c.1593), Shakespeare fuses ancient pagan and contemporary Christian religious language and anachronistically alludes to the transformative events of the Reformation: history had powerful lessons to teach the Elizabethans. The play begins with a Roman stigmatization of Goths as barbarians, and yet by the final act the Second Goth gazes 'upon a ruinous monastery' (V.i.21). His lugubrious reflection hints at Henry VIII's monastic closure policy and suggests a powerful analogy between what Samuel Kilger called 'the breakup of the Roman empire by the Goths and the demands of the humanist reformers in northern Europe for religious freedom, interpreted as liberation from Roman priestcraft.'[76] The moral energy of the Goths is seen here as

---

[73] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 3.

[74] Piero Boitani, *The Gospel According to Shakespeare*, trans. Montemaggi and Jacoff (Notre Dame, IA: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), p. 7.

[75] David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore, eds., *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 7.)

[76] Samuel Kliger, *The Goths in England* (1952, repr. London: Literary Licensing Publishers, 2011), p. 33.

comparable to the Reformation's rejuvenations of the sixteenth century. The play's language reinforces this hypothesis when Aaron appeals to Roman integrity:

> Yet for I know thou art religious
> And hast a thing within thee called conscience,
> With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies
> Which I have seen thee careful to observe…
>
> (V.i.74-7)

References to the mutilated Lavinia as 'martyr' echoes John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, a work of martyrology where maiming is a predominant feature of the book's account of religious persecution; Titus' words upon the exsanguination of Chiron and Demetrius, 'Receive the blood' (V.ii.197) resonates as a dark parody of Eucharistic imagery: as Jonathan Bate has pointed out, Protestants could claim Roman Catholics were barbaric because they made the ceremony into 'a cannibalistic feast where the wine was literally the blood of Christ.'[77] Moreover, contemporary fears of a Catholic counter-Reformation and subjugation upon the death of a childless Elizabeth seem reflected in the play's early exploration of succession and imperial tyranny. Foxe himself had claimed 'the Christian faith' was received into Britain 'in the time of Lucius their king'.[78] As Bate has said, 'the Goths who accompany Lucius [at the play's end], we may then say, are there to secure the Protestant succession.'[79]

Across the plays is evidence of Shakespeare's attentiveness to the unavoidability of religion and to the elementary (if turbulently contested) manner by which people strove to comprehend their own lives and its interaction with their immediate family, local communities, the wider state and, ultimately, God himself. Religious terminology is ordinary, predictable and entrenched in the language of the plays, and is more residually literal than many similar expressions retained into modernity.

We have seen how religious language and imagery could be potent in discursive terms, yet the everyday nature of theological vocabulary indicates the way in which it traversed culture. To disregard it is to disregard the greater part, even in many respects the entirety, of early modern society. Yet, as we have seen, to identify Shakespeare's personal convictions or sympathies from this is not viable: to do so, 'can short-circuit and even pre-empt the density of the embodied world of the plays and the sheer complexity of that historical, social, and linguistic inheritance.'[80]

He does not tell us *what* to believe either, but more exactly demonstrates that people encounter and generate intricate patterns and relations to their pasts and futures through the diverse possibilities of a multiplicity of forms of belief. It is the varied *experience* of belief, more willingly than any claims to the truth of it that absorbs Shakespeare. The plays are not ciphers of private belief, nor do they straightforwardly express forms of religious opinion, but they are modes of reflecting the way religion is experienced in and across society. As David Scott Kastan has argued, 'religion in the plays is a psychological and social reality that registers as form, rather than a creedal one that registers as belief.'[81] Shakespeare has, in Alison Shell's

---

[77] Jonathan Bate (ed.), *Titus Andronicus* (London: A & C Black, 1995), p. 20.
[78] John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1563).
[79] Bate, *Titus Andronicus*, p. 21.
[80] Beckwith, *Grammar*, p. 11.
[81] Kastan, *Will*, p. 8.

pungent phrase, a 'confessional invisibility.'[82] Katherine Duncan-Jones, however, seems to overstate by asserting that 'Shakespeare's writings are notable for their adroit side-stepping of specific religious or ecclesiastical issues.'[83] A. D. Nuttall's suggestion that 'neither the Reformation nor the shock waves it produced in the counter-culture of Catholicism ... make any palpable impression in the plays'[84] surely misunderstands both the far-reaching impact of the Reformation on all aspects of society, playwriting included, and the depth of creative possibility Shakespeare saw in it.

Attention to history in new historicism and cultural materialism tended to either pay no attention to the religious aspect in Shakespeare or regard it as merely a mechanism of government domination, with earthly socio-political matters the intended goal and religion the vehicle to arrive at them. However, the way in which religion was experienced of and in itself is now properly producing part of the wider examination of the early modern character, and its representation in Shakespeare.

In literary studies the very concept of the Renaissance was conceived together with that of secularization:[85] since Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) there has been a tendency to see this as the point in human development when the 'shackles' of religion were thrown off, giving way to autonomous – and therefore universal – art. Literature has been seen as the new theology. Shakespeare became, post Burckhardt, one of the key emblems for this understanding of cultural history and the very apparent secularity of his art became fundamental in appreciating both his identity and magnitude since it at the same time elucidated the journey towards modernity.

Literature in general and Shakespeare in particular have been regarded as taking over the function and responsibilities of theological discourse as an academic discipline, and as such its secularity was necessary to its formation, independent from religious traditions. Art, and man's creation and interaction with it, came to be regarded as capturing the territory of religious creeds, artefacts and behaviour, but now with the common benefits of a more coherent codification (cf. Matthew Arnold).[86] Much as religion placed the divine at the centre of human existence, secular culture put humanity at the centre of itself, as an internal form and allowing for its expansion and prevalence, with Shakespeare as both the origin and maturity for this notion of the human within.

As a model secularization has now waned: the role, purpose and influence of religion have re-emerged as key indicators. The employment of religious language, concepts, customs and discourses in the early modern theatre is more nuanced than the 'spiritual void' argument supposes, and to see it as an instance of Western disillusionment or dissatisfaction in all probability indicates the disenchanted perspective of later periods, even if it may plausibly have some responsibility in initiating that subsequent outlook. In addition, the ubiquitous categorization 'early modern' can predispose us towards a forthright teleology embracing more recent and progressive attitudes not yet formulated, recognized or even imagined. Society is not disillusioned into atheism or even agnosticism, but it is more sceptical, a process begun generations earlier. The theatre might then be seen to operate as a form of parallel

---

[82] Shell, *Religion*, p. 235.

[83] Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 224.

[84] Nuttall, *Thinker*, p. 17.

[85] For an outline of the processes of secularisation since the Renaissance, see: Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-19.

[86] Robert H. Super (ed), *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960–1977), Volume VI.

ministry, a corresponding spiritual facility that aims to be, as Jeffrey Knapp has said, 'a means not to fight against [God's] word, but to save it from papists and preachers,' so that playwrights construct plays 'intended and received as contributions to the cause of true religion.'[87] Nevertheless, if the version idealizing the reimbursement of a spiritual deficit tends to presume the secular modernity it strives to account for, the 'parallel ministry' model may also be guilty of presuming the enchantment it plans to recover.

Huston Diehl has said that it does appear obvious that the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre in London acted as, 'an arena in which the disruptions, conflicts, and radical changes wrought by the Protestant Reformation are publicly explored.'[88] However, the degree to which this exploration related to issues of doctrine, shifting modes of worship, or Church prerogatives is disputed.

The false dichotomy between the secular and the religious has emphasised rigid and unyielding boundaries, with religion often uncomfortably reconceived as simply that which is not secular, and both concepts as a consequence have been overstated. The Reformation wrought change across society, not simply in religious doctrine or behaviour. The interconnectedness of religion to all other aspects of life in the early modern period means that we can detect the Reformation's impact across a number of Shakespearean discussions that might not seem either religious or connected to religious concerns at first glance.

Shakespeare shows his fascination with the Reformation's intricate ontological and existential issues by repeatedly presenting characters as internally divided, alienated and broken. He obliges his characters to separate their socially assembled identity from their more immediate and instinctive self, and in so doing discloses a consciousness made up of numerous, inconsistent selves, each of which can deceive and delude the other. Linda Charnes proposes that, as a consequence of this space between identity and subjectivity, 'the possibility of indeterminacy, of dis-identification, as well as a fantasy of autonomous choice in thought, action, or emotion, becomes thinkable.'[89] Shakespeare's plays constantly enquire what it means to have a self-reflecting and self-determining relationship with your 'self'.

The facility to behave self-consciously, and questions of self-identity and self-awareness, did not of course begin with Shakespeare or the Reformation (even if this period's particular sense of trauma, loss and self-estrangement amplified it). Arguing against modernity's perception of the Middle Ages as a remote and simplified other, Andrew James Johnston suggests that the medieval era was not, in reality, lacking its own forms of historical self-consciousness and that 'it may be possible to discern within medieval literary discourse forms of cultural self-analysis that form the basis for some of the tropes and topoi which, ironically, later served to insulate the medieval securely in its ineluctable sphere of total alterity'.[90]

Acknowledging 'forms of conscious medieval self-scrutiny', Johnston proposes that the period articulates its own identity, not through the ideological discourse of modernity but in the semi-covert relationship that its texts present 'between narrative voice(s) and narrative

---

[87] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 120.

[88] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 4.

[89] Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 8-9.

[90] Andrew James Johnston, *Performing the Middle Ages from 'Beowulf' to 'Othello'* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), p. 14.

structure'.[91] The Middle Ages' texts express their own self-conscious identity through the examination of their own performances in 'complex analyses of medieval performativity itself, analyses that achieve their specific claims to sophistication by staging what they discuss.'[92] Drawing on Judith Butler's proposal in *Gender Trouble*[93] that the repetition of a rule-bound discourse structures a given concept of subjectivity, Johnston suggests texts reiterate the enlightening discourse from which their own discursive identity transpires, repeating their own dependency 'on the illusion of the natural, on substantializing effects which create a vision of the kind of discursive unity that is called an "age", an "era", or a "period".'[94] Thus, the medieval text has already expounded and decisively confronted the self-same awareness of pre-modern identity that modernity would later devise in an erroneous post-medieval seizure of historical differentiation.

The period before the Reformation exhibits a number of self-identifying characteristics that would later be amplified and extended, across religious and philosophical spheres, creating a more self-aware but also more fragmented sense of the self. The medieval/ early modern division is one of the strongest in literary and historical studies, 'not least because the cultural investments in maintaining that division are exceptionally powerful.'[95] It will see that the synchronic stereotypes, however broadly necessary, have restricted our ability to properly elucidate the conflicts and continuities in thinking and behaviour in the pre- and post-Reformation period, and as a consequence, our ability to examine Shakespeare's works. The outcome of emancipations or subjugations might be discernible only years after the event, and perhaps in composite association with a distinct contemporary activity.

Revising is a constant feature of historical and cultural studies, and opinions on those new elucidations are correspondingly unstable. Part of the rationality of reinterpretation rests with affording a more durable, more compelling version that better encapsulates the objective truth of the issue, even if that 'truth' can only ever be approximated. At the other pole are researchers who deem that each generation/ group/ subgroup inevitably considers history in a different way, each fashioning for itself a more functional past whilst also being open to the charge of a presentist self-absorption (though these scholars do not wholly reject the possibility of empirically determining the superiority of some positions to others). Such subjectivity further animates revision. It should be possible to appropriate from both sides, so that while every group sees questions differently, we can (to a certain extent paradoxically) also mould a more expansive history that integrates these specific interpretations.

This thesis will seek to absorb the impact of the Reformation on Shakespeare, while simultaneously reconfirming what is threatened if we do not take into account the religious element to his work. First, as we have seen, there is no clear demarcation between what one might consider the material sphere of ritual and that of a symbolic or metaphorical representation; ritual is not restricted to the religious field, it occurs in daily life and the boundary between the two is not always clear cut. Furthermore, when rituals appear in the theatre they are not necessarily to be deemed as detached from the tangible authenticity of non-fictive experience.

---

[91] *Ibid*., pp. 15,18.

[92] *Ibid*., p. 18.

[93] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[94] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[95] Brian Cummings & James Simpson, eds, *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.

This thesis does not endeavour to arbitrarily impress religious ideas and principles upon Shakespeare's oeuvre. Rather, it strives to comprehend more fully the rapport between Shakespeare and the religion of the post-Reformation era. This thesis recognizes the numerous absorbing figurations of specific and generic religious beliefs in Shakespeare's plays, and aspires to discuss Shakespeare as a religious writer in a spacious signification, as a dramatist who was enthralled by the questions, contradictions and interrogations of the age, and a playwright remarkably conscientious to the ethical, political and ontological characteristics and implications of the post-Reformation upheavals. This thesis reads Shakespeare's drama and their religiosity collectively in order to divulge the theological and philosophical intensities that occur within his dramas.

Drawing upon a range of examples from a collection of literary and religious sources, the methodological approach applied by this thesis occasions the treatment of Shakespeare's dramas as religiously receptive texts, abundant in theological, political and social significance. This introductory chapter maintains that the critical 'religious turn' in Shakespearean and early modern research has appropriately pursued to identify works within their historical framework, with a view to energizing the germane confessional affairs of the era, yet all too often they have done so to the detriment of employing such contextualisation to the provision of these creations as imaginative pieces of literature. The second chapter studies the critical past of the tragicomic plays; the next chapter evaluates the theological, ecclesiastical and theatrical axes of the pre- and post-Reformation era, particularly contemplating the encounter between church and playhouse. The next chapters investigate how three Shakespearean tragicomedies engage with the complications and phenomena fostered in the post-Reformation period. My readings trace the wide-ranging trajectory of religious deliberation in these dramas, first by assessing the temporal religious concerns of *Pericles*, then by looking at Shakespeare's treatment of eschatology and religious politics in *The Winter's Tale*, and finally by contemplating the resonance of religious upheavals on authority and jurisdiction in *The Tempest*.

CHAPTER TWO

Critical Review of the Literature

For many years the tragicomedies[96] were regarded unfavourably with critics, but they have always tended to be popular with audiences. In his *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words*, Simon Palfrey puts forward one possible explanation:

> Shakespearean tragicomedy, it is often thought, is mainly an amplification of [courtly idealism], with a vision not simply patriotic, but dream-sewn, hierophantic and celestial. So, whereas history is a tale of irony – of hopes misconceived, gaps between intent and end, of massive hyperbole and *sotto voce* subversion – tragicomedy is history's impossible, itinerant, escapist corrective.[97]

The first responses to the tragicomedies for the most part took issue with the form Shakespeare had chosen for his later plays. The tragicomedy form has often been an easy target for a somewhat routine critical denigration: the neo-classicists, in particular, found them difficult to appreciate: the tragicomedies' whimsical presentation of story and structure were too incompatible with their strict principles of realism with regard to probability, verisimilitude and classical restraint.

To Ben Jonson, heir to Philip Sidney as England's foremost neoclassical critic, the modern reputation of, and interest in, the tragicomedies would have seemed a distant and dim-witted suggestion: in his 'Induction' to *Bartholomew Fayre* in 1614 he lambasts plays of their hue as a 'nest of *Antiques*', a 'Servant-monster', a 'concupiscence of *Jigges* and *Dances*'.[98] The bestial and sexual fertility of Jonson's language suggests repugnance at Shakespeare's cheerfully chaotic indiscretions with character and plot – perhaps, too, dread at an inversion of the stable body politic and a certain sullenness at the older playwright's brazen ability to transform and subvert forms.[99] Jonson's reaction indicates that these plays were even then being considered as a group.

Writing in 1629, conceivably jealous of the popularity[100] of plays like *Pericles* and no doubt incensed by the failure of his own *The New Inn*, Jonson certainly found the tragicomedies crude and unworthy of a respectable stage (and stealing his audiences). In an

---

[96] Although this thesis considers only *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, for the purposes of this review of the literature it will also incorporate discussion of *Cymbeline*.

[97] Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

[98] Ben Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy & Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925-52), 6:127-32. The 'servant-monster' is of course Caliban in *The Tempest*; Jonson does not name *Cymbeline*, but the 'nest of antiques' is doubtless a sneer at the aquiline part of V.iv when Jupiter soars on his eagle above a family of ancient ghosts.

[99] Though as Simon Palfrey has noted: 'One needn't share Jonson's defensive punctiliousness to recognize how the modern academic tradition has lost access to something of the plays' keenness and vim.' Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 2.

[100] Plays like *Pericles*, *contra* Jonson, were not just fodder for the masses. Records of the visit of the Venetian ambassador Zorzi Giustinian help date the play between 5th January 1606 and 23rd November 1608. Giustinian – according to the title-page of the 1609 First Quarto – took with him to the Globe the French ambassador and 'the Secretary of Florence' where *Pericles* 'hath been diuers and sundry times acted by his Maiesties Seruants.' Whilst ambassadorial attendance is not the final word in criticism, this surely argues against the mere pandering to a coarse popular taste that so much early comment lamented. Cf. E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 2:335, 346.

'Ode to Himself' he attacked audiences that 'love lees, and leave the lusty wine', and the dramatists whose imaginations ran away with themselves, creating '*Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*.' He goes on:

> No doubt some mouldy tale,
> Like Pericles; and stale
> As the Shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish—
> Scraps out of every dish
> Throwne forth, and rak't into the comon tub...[101]

Detractors such as Jonson seemed unaware of the plays' own ingrained alertness to their lack of reality or replication of real life. In *The Winter's Tale* Paulina, with a sideways wink to the audience, talks of the play's proceedings as 'all as monstrous to our human reason' (V.i.41); at the end of *The Tempest* Prospero tells Alonso (and us) 'not to infest your mind with beating on/ The strangeness of this business' (V.i.246-7) – in other words, to ignore the peculiarity of the tale and focus on its deeper import.

The preposterousness of the plot was not the only issue to excite early critics. The language itself, they said, failed to maintain stability, varying swiftly and indecently between registers, from court speech and civility to degenerate babble in a brothel. Aristotle's classical unities were constantly and consistently broken or ignored – action jumping in time and place, to remote lands or generations; *Cymbeline* seemed to occupy simultaneously both ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy. Even Dr. Johnson, that most decisive of early Bardolators, had his doubts about *Cymbeline*, rejecting as beyond serious contemplation 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.'[102] *The Tempest* – at least on the surface – conformed to a cohesive time and space, yet as we will see, this in itself may be both part of the illusion to accommodate the multifarious layers of allusion in the work, and a jarring discourse to the decidedly *un*classical romance/ tragicomic form of the play.

Before looking at modern criticism on the tragicomedies generally I will first consider their earlier receptions more individually. *Pericles*, as we have seen, was popular from the outset with audiences, even as it infuriated purists like Jonson. After an extended closure of the theatre due to plague, the King's Men performed *Pericles* at the Globe in June 1631 – their need to maximise the box-office receipts surely meant they had to put on a well-liked hit for their comeback. During the Interregnum it seems to have stayed fashionable, cited in poetry of the period,[103] and when the theatres re-opened with the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, *Pericles* was staged straight away. It appears that it was the only Shakespeare play presented since 1642, and would shortly be regarded as desirable as *Henry IV* and *Othello* when put on with John Rhodes's company at The Phoenix, Drury Lane.[104]

After this there is a considerable silence, with no recorded performance until Samuel Phelp's production at Sadler's Wells in 1854. A bastardised version does seem to have existed in the eighteenth century, and was planned but never staged in 1796 at The Theatre Royal,

---

[101]Ben Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy & Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925-52), 6:492-3.

[102] H.R. Woudhuysen, ed., *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 235.

[103] See *Plays and Poems*, ed. Edmond Malone, 10 vols (1790), 'The Times displayed in six sestiads' (1646), by Samuel Shepherd to Philip, Earl of Pembroke, p. 483.

[104] Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 21.

Covent Garden.[105] *Pericles* was clearly seen as stage worthy but its place in critical accounts – like the other genres – is hard to locate before modern times. This evident incongruity with popular opinion is likely to be less to do with aesthetic discrimination than with *Pericles*' persistent textual situation: absent from the First Folio, and uniquely in the canon only a 'bad quarto' exists for *Pericles* and it is dreadfully damaged. Excluded and broken from the outset, together with the dual authorship misgivings, *Pericles* was prevented from a closer inspection by the critics. Even more recently the plethora of quasi-scientific and analytical-statistical processes the unfortunate text has been subjected to has further put off much scholarly investigation.

Cymbeline has long been regarded as perhaps the oddest hybrid among all Shakespeare's crossbreed tragicomedies, and its tragicomic (rather than historic or merely tragic) status has long been questioned. We have already seen Dr. Johnson's memorable comments, but George Bernard Shaw condemned it too, as did H. H. Furness, albeit half-heartedly. On the other hand, *Cymbeline* found an important supporter in William Hazlitt, praising it 'a favourite'[106] and as 'one of the most delightful of Shakespeare's historical plays', significantly appending that 'it may be considered as a dramatic tragicomedy.'[107] This seems to be the facet of the play(s) that Johnson failed to see.[108] Hazlitt further notes that:

> The business of the plot evidently thickens in the last act: the story moves forward with increasing rapidity at every step … [The] fate of almost every person in the drama is made to depend on the solution of a single circumstance … Dr. Johnson is of the opinion that Shakespeare was generally very inattentive to the winding up of his plots. We think the contrary is true … Shakespeare not only lets us into the minds of his characters, but gives us a tone and colour to the scenes he describes from the feelings of their imaginary inhabitants … If he was equal to the greatest of things, he was not above an attention to the smallest.[109]

Hazlitt, then, recognises both the romantic and meticulous temperament of *Cymbeline*, and its more radical technical achievements, indicating his Romantic disposition to the now waning Classicism of Johnson *et al*.

Nineteenth-century criticism of *Cymbeline*, post-Hazlitt and inadequately synthetic, came to view Imogen as something of a ritualised and cult figure. By no means unique, Swinburne's rhapsodic account was perhaps though the summit of the Imogenian ecstasy:

> The very crown and flower of all her father's daughters, – I do not speak here of her human father, but her divine, – woman above all of Shakespeare's women is Imogen. As in Cleopatra we found the incarnate sex, the woman everlasting, so in Imogen we find half-glorified already the immortal godhead of womanhood … The woman best beloved in all the world of song and all the tide of time.[110]

---

[105] This is mentioned on the title-page of *Pericles*, from *Bell's British Theatre* (1796).
[106] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817; Create Space Publishing, 2010), p. 12.
[107] *Ibid*., p. 1.
[108] Johnson had little time or tolerance for the supernatural or the fanciful in Shakespeare: he found *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 'wild and fantastical'.
[109] Hazlitt, *Characters*, p. 2, 11.
[110] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880), p. 227.

As we shall see below, by the twentieth century something would have to give against such an extreme position.

'Our ship hath touched upon / The deserts of Bohemia' (III.iii.1-2): after Antigonus's 'Exit, pursued by a bear' (III.iii.57) and the coming to life of Hermione's statue ('be stone no more', V.iii.99), *The Winter's Tale* is best known in the popular imagination for its Bohemian coastline, something Jonson smugly leapt upon in 1619: 'Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles.'[111] The 'error' has stuck, and reveals a little of the early critical misunderstandings of the tragicomedies. Shakespeare would likely have known Bohemia's location from Abraham Ortelius's 1606 world atlas with its Renaissance map of Europe, with Bohemia landlocked and encircled by mountains.[112] The inaccuracy divulges the spirit of the play: a wreckage off Bohemia in Act III would forewarn the spectators unfamiliar with the tragicomedy genre the fantasy elements to follow in Acts IV-V.[113] The upside down topography and post-Reformation religious geopolitics at work in *The Winter's Tale* will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.[114]

The early critical reception of *The Winter's Tale* in the later seventeenth century is vague. It appears to have been a success at court and was likely admired by the nobility, and by 1632 a young poet called John Milton had a verse 'On Shakespeare' printed among the preface to the Second Folio with punning references to statues and (Apollonian) oracles. Yet after 1634 it disappeared from the stage for more than a century – and unlike *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* or *The Tempest* was not even revised after the Restoration. The play's source – Robert Greene's 1588 bestseller *Pandosto* – remained as popular as ever well into the eighteenth century, only eventually fading with the birth of the epistolary novel. When it did finally resurface in Henry Giffard's 1741 Covent Garden production it did not last long and after that only an inadequately reworked vehicle for David Garrick existed.

As with the other tragicomedies critical opinion seemed to develop apace in the nineteenth century and John Philip Kemble's 1802 production at Drury Lane focused on Leontes' psychology, gaining Hazlitt's support: 'beset with doubts and fears, and entangled more and more in a thorny labyrinth.'[115] Kemble's Leontes was largely restrained and dignified, an unfortunate man grappling grievously with jealousy. Later critics came to see the role as more unstable: Coleridge saw him as naturally jealous, moody and bad-tempered with an intrinsic terror of being mocked. Thomas Campbell found Shakespeare's genius to reach 'its zenith' in the statue scene, with Sarah Siddons specifically giving full justice to its 'romantic perfection.'[116]

---

[111] E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare,* 2:207. This does not actually happen in precisely this way anywhere in *The Winter's Tale* and Jonson may have been confusing the shipwrecks of *Pericles* or *The Tempest*.

[112] Not that the specificity of the countries is really germane apart from the disorientating function it serves the drama: 'The setting for the feast in Bohemia in particularly unforeign. It is pure Warwickshire, in fact. The price of wool and holiday food are straight out of Shakespeare's Stratford.' John Pitcher (ed), *The Winter's Tale*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 100.

[113] Indeed, the topsy-turvy nature of the storyline to come is then announced in Time's speech (IV.i.1-32).

[114] In the source tragicomedy *Pandosto* the action starts in Bohemia, shifts to Sicilia and ends back in Bohemia: the green-eyed host is the King of Bohemia, the accused guest the King of Sicilia. In Shakespeare, the countries and kings are switched, and the direction of the narrative is inverted, starting in Sicilia, progressing to Bohemia, before returning back to Sicilia. Shakespeare also gives the leonine symbol of Bohemia to the Sicilian King Leontes (*Leo*, Latin for 'lion') and to the Bohemian King a Mediterranean name, Polixenes (from πολυξενος, Greek for 'much visited' and 'hospitable').

[115] Hazlitt, *Characters*, p. 278, 281.

[116] Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols (1834), 2:265.

The Tempest was radically overhauled at the Restoration by John Dryden and William Davenant and their extravagant revamp dominated attitudes to the play, averting critical attention from the original Folio text, with even Samuel Pepys believing this version to be 'an old play of Shakespeare's.'[117] In the eighteenth century Neoclassical manners saw a stress on reason and morals, with a restraining, orderly Prospero, protective over his creation like an Old Testament patriarch.

For the Romantics resourceful genius and poetry were closely related and by the late eighteenth century Shakespeare had been proclaimed as the exemplar of the artistic imagination, with the playwright as an instinctive talent who pursued natural forms before antiquated conventions. Poetry moved beyond Dr. Johnson's 'just representations of general nature'[118] to become the unique representation of the writer's psyche, with the play texts not simply actor's speeches but manifestations of private emotions. Indeed for Charles Lamb, The Tempest was unstageable and should remain on the page 'out of reverence for the author.'[119] Coleridge concurred with him, regarding it as a 'purely romantic drama' that 'addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty.' Hazlitt, too, agreed:

> The preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with the sense of truth … [The] real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream.[120]

The Romantic affinity for severe yet striking characters and surroundings were drawn to The Tempest's alien isle 'full of noises, / Sounds and sweets airs that give delight' (III.ii.135-6), to the mysterious agent Ariel 'swiftness of thought personified' and to the elemental creature Caliban growing 'out of the soil where it is rooted, uncontrolled, uncouth, and wild, uncramped by any of the means of custom.'[121]

Shelley, too, was inspired to write poetry rejoicing in Ariel's poetic force and uncomplicated splendour yet it was of course the vital figure of the sorcerer Prospero that most excited the Romantic critics, identifying him with Shakespeare himself.[122] Prospero, they said, spoke for Shakespeare and, according to the Romantic creed, poetry is the personal demonstration of the author, so Prospero's thoughts were Shakespeare's too. By 1875 Edward Dowden would be maintaining that:

> [Prospero's] self-mastery, his calm validity of will, his sensitiveness to wrong, his unfaltering justice, and, with these, a certain abandonment, a remoteness from the common joys and sorrows of the world, are characteristic of Shakespeare as discovered to us in his [late] plays.[123]

---

[117] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell & Hyman, 1970-85), 8:521-2.

[118] Samuel Johnson, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Mona Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 491.

[119] Charles Lamb, *The Dramatic Essays* (London: Ulan Press, 2012), p. 191.

[120] Hazlitt, *Characters*, p. 82.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 86, 84. Coleridge and Hazlitt would also see nobility in Caliban, redeemed as an imaginative creation drawn from nature. Later critics would of course see him as a slave figure standing up to tyranny. This will be discussed further in chapter five.

[122] See 'With a Guitar, to Jane' in Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 599-601.

[123] Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875; London: Nabu Press, 2010), p. 371.

For such critics, Prospero and Shakespeare were both artists who recognised human truths and whose words could adjudicate integrity, honour and wisdom.

Much twentieth century criticism since Lytton Strachey's 1904 essay 'Shakespeare's Final Period'[124] contested the view of the tragicomedies as an inconsequential biographic coda to Shakespeare's career. This led some commentators to go too far back in the opposite direction, establishing the plays in distinctly symbolic terms, and leaving little room for manoeuvre. The allegorical approach dominated critical exertions for the first half of the century, with many still strangely enough also acutely predisposed to a neo-Romantic biographical attachment, where the life history of the playwright was to be metaphorically encoded in the texts.

The Tempest has long attracted an array of allegorical readings, 'from the nature of the poetic imagination to the three-part division of the soul, the wonders of Renaissance science to man's colonial responsibilities.'[125] Not all colonial interpretations are allegorical – some such as Francis Barker's are more absorbed by the structural and discursive features of the play's genesis overlapping with the onset of wider British colonialism.[126] However, many critical readings of *The Tempest* have argued that the play is about the New World and represents European imperialism (and, latterly by extension, sexism, consumerism and racial bigotry). Numerous writers in Latin America (among them Rubén Darío, José Enrique Rodó and Jesús Semprúm) criticised western aggression and vulgarity with freely attached metaphorical symbols from *The Tempest*, mainly casting the invaders as ill-mannered Calibans. Victorian writers perhaps naturally saw the play as expressing the nobler aspects of the beginnings of colonialism, leading savages to civilisation.[127] By the twentieth century scholars such as Walter Alexander Raleigh and Robert Ralston Cawley heavily 'Americanised' the play, reading the New World into every word and situation, though they were criticised by sceptics like Elmer Edgar Stoll as being patchy and unsubstantiated correlations.[128]

These readings came to change, particularly after the social scientist Octave Mannoni's incendiary *Prospero and Caliban* (1956), a non-literary work that shaped much critical and more mainstream thinking on *The Tempest* in the second half of the century: Prospero was reprimanded and denounced as a tyrant, the slaves Caliban and Ariel empowered and triumphant in a variety of metaphoric requisitions from Antigua to Zambia. The play was considered as a revealing essay of the first chapter of English imperialism, incriminated in the will-to-power of James' court. Prospero's magic became an instrument of empire, with the tragicomic form changed from a utopian exhibition to an ideological accomplice by way of a legitimising 'Providence divine' (I.i.159). Post-colonial criticism saw Prospero's magic as merely the technology of domination rather than the enchantment of

---

[124] Lytton Strachey, 'Shakespeare's Final Period', repr. in *Books and Characters* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1922), p. 60.

[125] Anne Barton (ed.), *The Tempest* (London: New Penguin Shakespeare, 1968), p. 21.

[126] Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, '"Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish": The Discursive Contexts of *The Tempest*', John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 191-205.

[127] Sidney Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare* (1898) and his numerous essays on American Indians: 'Caliban's visits to England', *Cornhill Magazine*, n.s. 34 (1913), pp. 333-45; 'The Call of the West: America and Elizabethan England', Part 3: 'The American Indian and Elizabethan England', *Scribner's Magazine* (Sept. 1907), pp. 313-30; reprinted in *Elizabethan and Other Essays*, ed. Frederick S. Boas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929).

[128] In the Shakespearean canon it is only *The Comedy of Errors* that mentions 'America' – which Dromio raucously locates 'upon [Nell's] nose, all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain' (III.ii.141-3). 'America' is here linked with a Spanish colonial concern not an English one.

benevolence: 'the tragicomedy equivalent of martial law'[129] and 'the space really inhabited in colonial history by gunpowder.'[130]

That Prospero has himself been usurped and exiled, that the shipwrecked Italian courtiers show no interest in occupying the island on which they find themselves, might seem to argue against a colonial reading, but most current criticism on *The Tempest* accepts this convention, though some such as David Scott Kastan[131] and Jerry Brotton[132] have challenged the orthodoxy and argue for a restitution of the play to its European political origins.

The Winter's Tale has been regarded by many as the re-enactment of the Christian narrative of sin, atonement and resurrection – the animation of Hermione's statue indicating 'fulfilment beyond this life'.[133] G. Wilson Knight's post-war *The Crown of Life* seemed to be the apex of approaches that strove to remove the plays from their historical origins and into a mystical and symbolic realm – what Empson called the mid-century neo-Christians. Like his earlier reading of the tragedies in *The Wheel of Fire* (1930), Wilson Knight determined not to be distracted by the extraneous details of Shakespeare's life: Jacobean people and politics were simply 'irrelevancies' obscuring the eternal spirit 'burn[ing] through [their] rhythm of pain, endurance and joy.'[134] For Wilson Knight part of the artist's accomplishment was to transcend the limits 'of time and history' and to create 'parables of a profound and glorious truth' where life overcomes death, beyond mere temporal poetic forms.[135] Wilson Knight seems to go too far to demand 'a purely philosophic analysis of the text.'[136] In later editions he sought to stress that his conclusions 'asserted not 'dogmas' but the 'mystical truth' behind [the works]; not forms but spirit',[137] yet his quasi-philosophical interpretations insist upon reading the plays beyond what the texts affirm.

Northrop Frye's *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Tragicomedy* (1965) took a parallel line to Wilson Knight, perceiving the tragicomedies as manifestations of the immortal myths of world civilisation. Here the cycle of creation/ destruction/ re-creation forms the core of all literature through the ages, especially the creations myths found in nearly all religious traditions. The tragicomedy genre continues this 'moving from death to rebirth, decadence to renewal, winter to spring, darkness to a new dawn.'[138] *The Winter's Tale*, with its first half set in a court winter (Acts I-III) followed by a pastoral spring (Acts IV-V), repeats this recurring imagery of transition and new growth. Moreover, these plays with their more sombre themes and plots are nearer to the archetypal re-creation narrative form than were the relatively straightforward 'love, quarrel and marriage' narratives of Shakespeare's earlier comedies. For Frye, the reviving power of the

---

[129] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, New Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 156.

[130] Peter Hulme, 'Hurricanes in the Caribbees: The Constitution of the Discourse of English Colonialism', in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francis Barker (Colchester Press, 1981), p. 74.

[131] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[132] Jerry Brotton, '"This Tunis, sir, was Carthage": contesting colonialism in The Tempest', in Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (eds), *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 23-42.

[133] Samuel Leslie Bethell, *The Winter's Tale: A Study* (London: Staples Press, 1947), p. 104.

[134] G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays* (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 31.

[135] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[137] G. Wilson Knight, *Crown*, p. 31, 'Additional Note'.

[138] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Tragicomedy* – New Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 121.

tragicomedies lifts them to a more elevated level, providing a foretaste of the heavenly realm we are striving to return to.

Frye and Wilson Knight's approach seems too withdrawn and self-insulating to be enduringly persuasive. Moreover, their isolating of the plays means many of the texts' subtleties are missed, reducing the numerous ways they bear out and expand the redemptive ideas Wilson Knight and Frye want to cite. This need to arrive at a more historically aware scrutiny of Shakespeare's tragicomedies – remote from the deified source of a set of permanent and everlasting truths – was perhaps also propelled by G.E. Bentley's prominent essay of 1948. Bentley argued that the tragicomedies were Shakespeare's reaction to the opportunities spawned by his company's move to the Blackfriars theatre in 1608.[139] So, for Bentley, rather than being the result of a personal voyage of self-discovery or a vision of a paradisal future, these plays came to pass from the rather more prosaic truth that the new theatre was both indoor and had a private audience, altering the atmosphere for which Shakespeare could write. However, fatal to Bentley's argument is the irrefutable fact that the first of Shakespeare's tragicomedies – *Pericles* – was a Globe play performed there by 1607, preceding the move to Blackfriars. The other tragicomedies were not solely performed at Blackfriars either – the scholar and astrologer Simon Forman saw productions of *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* at the Globe in 1611, where the King's Men still regularly acted.

Whilst it might be possible to contend that elaborate effects were incorporated into these plays to take advantage of the sophisticated technology on hand at Blackfriars (and other indoor playhouses), Andrew Gurr concluded that the actual production requirements were well within the Globe's capabilities. Further, *a propos* these plays' important musical needs, '[like *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*] *The Winter's Tale* has nothing that could not have been recreated by the famed Blackfriars musicians at the Globe.'[140] Undoubtedly some episodes in the plays seem suited to the more intimate space of the indoor theatre – Imogen's bedroom scene (*Cymbeline*, II.ii), for example, but one might also add that other scenes – such as the battle in *Cymbeline* (V.i-iii) or the huge rural panorama in *The Winter's Tale* (IV.iv) would surely need a larger space to make their full impact.

Taken as a whole, Bentley's line of reasoning appeared rather manufactured and missed a number of important factors. Besides, Shakespeare's desire to write tragicomedies was as likely influenced by the details of the contemporary theatre scene as by any move to an ostensibly more suitable site. The production of Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* makes plain that by late 1607 tragicomedy plays were already well-established enough to provoke the caricature of parody.

Bentley's argument had its appeal, however, and gained a sizeable endorsement. Many scholars have followed his claims by stating that the hopeful conclusions and courtly inclinations of the tragicomedies (seen, one must suppose, in opposition to the more bawdy style and themes of earlier Shakespearean Elizabethan-period comedies involving kings or lords) as reflecting a form of oblique flattery to the recently acceded James I. Indeed, for critics such as Gary Schmidgall,[141] Bentley helped underscore his contention that the tragicomedy plays, written for Blackfriars, illustrate the resurgence of royal patronage of the arts and a contented conformism in the spectators' expectations.

Glynne Wickham was another of a number of scholars who contended that Shakespeare's move to the tragicomedy genre arose from the more optimistic political mood

---

[139] G.E. Bentley, 'Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre', *Shakespeare Survey* 1 (1948), pp. 38-50.

[140] Andrew Gurr, '*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars', *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1988), pp. 92-3.

[141] Gary Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and the Courtly Aesthetic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).

of the new monarch's accession.[142] David Bergeron in *Shakespeare's Tragicomedies and the Royal Family* noted Glynne Wickham's overly schematised template, but still argued for Shakespeare presenting a 'mythos, an idealisation' of the royal family in the plays, and utilising the Stuarts as expedient contextual material.[143] For Bergeron, Shakespeare's tragicomedies' families represent the family of James I: for example the female succession that put James on both the thrones of Scotland and England through his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, is stressed by the considerable importance of daughters in the four plays.

Sandra Billington in *Mock Kings in Medieval and Renaissance Drama*[144] reinforces the perspective, seeing *Pericles* as an attempt to present a flawless king, remaining so despite the incessant ordeals he faces (one might point out that Pericles spends much of the play fleeing out of fear or brooding in self-pity). Billington's view of Pericles as a long-suffering, uncomplaining but diplomatic and uniting ruler is predictably viewed as a tribute to James I's personality and policies, whether on the Anglo-Scottish union he created or the royal succession. *Pericles*' recurrent echoes of James' own capacious volumes on the subject of kingship might endorse such a reading:

> 'Kings are earth's gods; in vice their law's their will;
> And, if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?'

> (I.i.104-5)

As we will see, however, Pericles and James might both be eloquent purveyors of the principled maxims of kingship, even as they are slightly inexpert keepers of these self-same regal-divine standards.

Leah Marcus saw *Cymbeline* as symbolising James' frustrated desire to build a united Britain, with the problems that beset this symbolised both in the broken then repaired marriage of Imogen and Posthumus, and the resolution of the Rome-Britain fracas in the spirit of concord. Though Marcus flirted with elements of the 'King James version' style of criticism, she rightly recognised the limits of seeing Shakespeare resorting to functioning as a propagandist for the King's political ambitions. For this reason she grants that through a 'subtle critique' of hermeneutic method and ideas of royal authorship, the play 'work[s] against the communication of its Stuart message', and that its actual political meaning was flexible and varied according to the audience.[145] Her procedures have helped pave the way for other more attuned studies of the tragicomedies but, even so, Marcus hampered her achievement by requiring definite meanings be extrapolated, regardless of where the texts themselves contradicted the conclusions.

It is unclear how legitimate it is to locate much designed to please the King in these works: Act II.iv of *Pericles* portrays an embryonic palace revolution caused by the monarch's absence – James' frequent nonattendance was indeed a talking matter at court by 1607; all the families in the tragicomedies are highly dysfunctional. The tragicomedies' rulers are never

---

[142] See: Glynne Wickham, 'From tragedy to tragi-comedy: King Lear as prologue', *Shakespeare Survey*, 26 (1973), pp. 33-48; 'Masque and anti-masque in *The Tempest*', *Essays and Studies* 28 (1975), pp. 1-14.
[143] David Bergeron, *Shakespeare's Tragicomedys and the Royal Family* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1985), p. 114.
[144] Sandra Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[145] Leah S. Marcus, '*Cymbeline* and the Unease of Topicality' in *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 143-4.

paragons of benevolence or rational governance: Pericles, Cymbeline, Leontes and Prospero might be given grace and redemption at their respective play's end (as the genre prescribes), but they remain unflattering depictions of contemporary leadership nevertheless.

If these 'King James versions' of the tragicomedies fail to stand up to inspection, both because of an oversimplified *and* an overly schematised interpretation of the plays, where does this leave the wider historical debate? The dominant turn towards historicism and the workings of cultural production in Shakespearean studies has left literary criticism's other connections often unexamined and suppressed. In recent years, however, there has been a revival in a more discursive and multi-platform approach to the dramas, partly in reaction to historicism's supremacy with an increasing awareness of their hybrid natures. I will move to examine these shortly, but first, it is essential to examine one of the key recent schools of theory.

New historicism has been one of the leading theoretical paradigms for understanding Renaissance literature since the 1980s and 1990s, and continues to reverberate in scholarship, even if it has lost a good deal of its earlier polemical power. Without doubt, this school of criticism has in many ways had a significant positive bearing on studies of the tragicomedies, particularly by perhaps finally burying that initial and persistent misconception of them as distant fantasy works, unconnected to the collective experiences of their day. In particular, new historicism's concentration on the self-justifying power of the state has drawn renewed attention to Shakespeare's commitment at the end of his career with the political issues with which it started in the history plays: the destabilising effects of despotism, treason and rebellion on the ambitions of government – geographic expansion, clear regal succession and strong leadership.

New historicism's political imperative sees power extending throughout society that by extension has enormous implications for the sense of self. It goes beyond, though is closely related to, both the Marxist exclusivity of class-based systems and Foucault's analysis of power structures in society, 'that through discourse analysis, hierarchies may be uncovered and questioned by way of analysing the corresponding fields of knowledge through which they are legitimated.'[146] New historicism's emphasis on the ideology and political temperament that governs an author's work, even as it remains mysterious to him, has caused controversy in its assumptions.

Stephen Greenblatt concluded his seminal work *Renaissance Self-fashioning* (1980) with some bleak and forbidding words that have in many ways come to be almost a definition of new historicism:

> In all my texts and documents, there were, so far as I could tell, no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; indeed, the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society … I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artefact.[147]

Greenblatt's confrontational proposition that subjectivity is the outcome of the juncture of historical and cultural forces (and not much else), and that literature is fated to sustain the prevailing socio-political status quo has been vehemently contested. As we shall see, Greenblatt discovered that his analysis led him to move the critical centre from the idea of

[146] Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Critical Theory* (Thriplow: Icon Books, 2009), p. 15.
[147] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 256.

the self to the broader procedures of social power. However, ideas of the self have remained to inform his criticism – even as he has tried to go beyond them. Greenblatt discusses Foucault's impact on his beliefs in the 2005 edition of *Renaissance Self-fashioning*. For Foucault:

> The innermost experiences of the individual – the feelings that lurk in the darkness – were not a kind of raw material subsequently worked on by social forces. Rather they were called into being and shaped by the institution that claimed only to police them. The experiences were not, for that reason, inauthentic; rather, he argued, the very conviction of authenticity was something that the institution, with its doctrines, its hierarchies, its cultural arrangements, its procedures, its conception of periodicity and discursive adequacy, made possible.[148]

Developing from a variety of existentialist dialectic, Greenblatt's arguments continually swing between declarations of the self and a form of emptiness: 'In our culture to abandon self-fashioning is to abandon the craving for freedom, and to let go of one's stubborn hold upon selfhood, even selfhood conceived as a fiction, is to die.'[149] Francis Barber assessed Greenblatt's conclusions as deeply undecided, with an impression of insecurity 'of the relation between autonomy and determination.'[150]

Greenblatt's attitude to that key connection between the individual and the socio-political world outside – the capacity for human beings to make choices – has not been entirely clear, and seems to have changed in his more recent work. To go back for a moment, in *Renaissance Self-fashioning* he wrote:

> Human actions must constantly be referred to an inner state that must, nonetheless, be experienced as the irresistible operation of a force outside the self, indeed alien to the self.[151]

Ewan Fernie has tersely said that Greenblatt, in statements such as these, 'often seems driven to frustrate and deny the very agency he invokes.'[152]

Then, in his later book *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990) Greenblatt gave a slightly different adherence to human choice, declaring 'even inaction or extreme marginality is understood to possess meaning and therefore to imply intention.'[153] The inherent ambiguity of acts moderates Greenblatt's resolve on the almost unavoidable nature of human choice: 'A gesture of dissent may be an element in a larger legitimation process, while an attempt to stabilise the order of things may turn out to subvert it.'[154]

Greenblatt's variable analysis on human choice and freedom is indicative of his far more entrenched distrust of the ability of individuals to have an effect on the socially structured world they are born to. In his 2010 work *Shakespeare's Freedom* Greenblatt is able to assert that 'Shakespeare … is the embodiment of human freedom', but then immediately

---

[148] *Ibid.*, p. xv.

[149] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[150] Francis Barker, *The Culture of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 153.

[151] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 111.

[152] Ewan Fernie, 'Terrible Action: Recent Criticism and Questions of Agency', *Shakespeare* 2:1 (2006), p. 95.

[153] Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 164.

[154] *Ibid.*,p. 164.

qualifies his stance by appending that 'he is also a figure of limits.'[155] Later he declares that these very limits serve as 'the enabling condition of his particular freedom'.[156] Liberty, however heroically attempted, for Greenblatt looks as if it is beyond our reach:

> Radical individuation – the singularity of the person who fails or refuses to match the dominant cultural expression and thus is marked as irremediably different – is suggestively present throughout the plays.[157]

New historicism in general and Stephen Greenblatt in particular have come in for a good deal of critical condemnation since their proposals were first put forward. Chief of the objections is the narrow focus on political structures, specifically that of the court and monarch's interests are overstated so that other influences are isolated or ignored. Albert H. Tricomi put the point well in his comment towards the end of the first wave of new historicism, seeing this interpretation of the plays as supposing that the leaders' authority 'suffused everything' and was 'virtually synonymous with the reality of seventeenth-century life.'[158] A second and related criticism is that the new historicist line of attack serves to encourage a one-sided, static perception of authority. It is argued that by stressing the suppressive facility of power and its ability to enclose or even attract that which threatens its supremacy, new historicism excludes the very opportunity of a successful confrontation by external agencies to the hegemony's domination.

As Stephen Mullaney has argued, new historicists such as Greenblatt (noting particularly his 1981 essay 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion'[159]) claimed that, '"the very condition of power" for the Tudor state rested in its capacity to produce forms of resistance and subversion, both in order to contain them and to use them to its own ends.'[160] Widely criticised as representing an absolutist and homogenous view of Elizabethan and Jacobean society, the new historicists silence the very voices of subversion they seek to hear. The numerous sectarian tracts or satirical plays of the period are ignored and the potency of individual human intervention against state hegemony neglected.

The inflexible concept of religion as a 'mechanism of state repression' has also been regarded by writers such as Greenblatt (for example, in his essay on *The Tempest*) as an integral part of the powers which create the early modern subject: religion is seen as the ultimate way to repress, control and reorder the people into submissive obedience.[161] As I have maintained earlier, however, religion was a passionately disputed issue that could not be separated from other aspects of public and private life, and was striking by its constant debate and – in this period perhaps more than any other –numerous changes that argue against a single mind or soul controlling state. As we will see in later chapters, it is perfectly possible to appreciate religion as a conservative instrument (and, as such, a useful one to a

---

[155] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), p.1.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[158] Albert H. Tricomi, *Reading Tudor-Stuart Texts Through Cultural Historicism* (Gainsville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 10.

[159] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion', *Shakespeare Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 21-65.

[160] Steven Mullaney, 'After the new historicism', *Alternative Shakespeares Vol 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 26-7.

[161] Stephen Greenblatt, '*The Tempest*: Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne', repr. in Kiernan Ryan (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Last* Plays (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 215-18.

state if it chose to wield it), but it was also – for much the same theological-psychological reasons – a weapon for resistance and revolution.

Yet for Greenblatt (among others) true subversion requires a total removal from power of the structures of the state, and unless this takes place then even the apparently subversive voices will be muted and repressed by state censorship: even the more seditious figures are acquiescent to the state. This is, as we have traced above, closely related to Greenblatt's concept of the self:

> There is no such thing as a single 'history of the self' in the sixteenth century, except as the product of our need to reduce the intricacies of complex and creative beings to safe and controllable order … Self-fashioning[162] occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of, both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss.[163]

Jonathan Dollimore has intended to use the term 'subversion' more generally than Greenblatt to embrace any kind of anti-government stance: he rightly contends that there was an eclectic assortment of political outlooks in early modern England, containing within it a diversity of challenging and competing conversations – though, in Greenblatt's strict terms, this is frequently not subversive at all.[164]

Dollimore's broader approach to 'subversion' also stimulates his more recent work on the self, and the need to accept a less rigid attitude to the human condition, than Greenblatt and others wish to purvey. Dollimore confrontationally condemns much recent historicist work for overlooking crucial and very real existential concerns: even if experiences such as death vary according to their cultural or historical perspective, claims Dollimore, 'the agreeable truth (diversity and difference) is used to evade the less agreeable (the anguish of mortality).'[165] Ewan Fernie provocatively agrees with Dollimore: 'For all its savvy transcendence of a tweedier past', he writes, new historicism is 'frightened of life.'[166] Fernie writes auspiciously of 'Shakespearean spirituality as a distinctive, inalienable, and challenging dimension of the plays.' His argument, however, is that 'a fresh consideration of spirituality might reinvigorate and strengthen politically progressive materialist criticism', or that 'spirituality holds out the hope of a more positive leap into a revolutionary alternative' — notions which intimate that religion and spirituality will again be used as mechanisms to promote political agendas.[167]

New historicists such as Steven Mullaney and Louis A. Montrose have sought to address some of the school's restrictions by putting forward more intricate, flexible and dynamic paradigms of what culture is and how it functions, seeking to institute more dialogue

---

[162] For Greenblatt this is defined as the method of creating one's identity and public persona according to social conventions and standards.

[163] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, pp. 8-9.

[164] Jonathan Dollimore, 'Introduction: Shakespeare, cultural materialism and the new historicism', in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (1985; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.

[165] Jonathan Dollimore, *Spiritual Shakespeares*, ed. Ewan Fernie (New York: Routledge,2005), p. 213.

[166] Ewan Fernie, 'Dollimore's Challenge', *Shakespeare Studies* 35 (2007), p. 142.

[167] Ewan Fernie, ed., *Spiritual Shakespeares*, (Routledge, 2005), 'Introduction', pp. 3,10. Quoted in Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith*, p. 163, n.47.

and negotiation in accepting the multiplicity of competing ideological positions throughout.[168]

The necessity to go beyond such a restrictive (and self-defeating) term as 'subversion' is acute with the tragicomedies: they contain a wealth of disobedient and rebellious (if admittedly not absolutely revolutionary) voices that are expressed without recourse to the 'subversive submission' Greenblatt has invoked. The tragicomedies' portrayal of royalty cannot be construed as flattering at all, and the plays seem no less eager to lay bare and demystify the 'the demi-god, Authority'[169] than either the tragedies or other earlier works. As David Norbrook has observed, the tragicomedy genre has always been a popular and populist one, and Shakespeare can be seen to make as much an anti-authoritarian a statement in these works as anything that could be interpreted as conservative or bowing to the King or gentry elite.[170] Shakespeare and the King's Men needed James' patronage for their own success and survival, but that did not mean their work was tailored to royal order.

The pro-Jamesian reading of the tragicomedies has been confronted by a number of recent critics such as Simon Palfrey in his *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words*, where he observes the plays' recurring oscillations between the worlds of tragicomedy and contemporary reality. The tragicomedies participate in an ongoing Jacobean discussion about the duties of a king and the boundary, if any, to his prerogative, something emphasised intensely since the Reformation's inherent questioning of the validity of earthly and divine mandates. Yet they can never of course be regarded as absolute statements of political philosophy:

> Tragicomedy's engagement with history is too much taken with things primal and irrational to be contained by either the end or the eloquence … of a 'vircivilis'.[171]

Palfrey is perceptive in his argument that readings of the tragicomedies need to move beyond the 'basic pattern of ruling class redemption'[172] and presumptive methodologies this entails: merely given new names to previously recognised relationships. He goes on to assert that such readings inevitably deprive the plays of their 'bustle and complexity', leading to 'inert, accidental, almost absent-minded explanations of motivation or character … [creating] facile, expedient or superficial criticism.'[173]

Constance Relihan has acknowledged the significance of studies such as David Bergeron's *Shakespeare's Tragicomedies and the Royal Family* and Leonard Tennenhouse's *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* in exploring 'the various ways social energy circulates throughout and between political and Shakespearean texts.'[174] Recognising

---

[168] Steven Mullaney, 'After the new historicism', Terence Hawkes (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares Vol 2* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 17-37; Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and politics of Culture', in H. Aram Vesser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 20-3.

[169] *Measure for Measure*, I.ii.120 (Claudio to the Provost).

[170] David Norbrook, '"What Cares These Roarers for the Name of King"': Language and Utopia in The Tempest', Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (eds), *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 24.

[171] Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 65.

[172] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[173] *Ibid.*, p. 5. Palfrey suggests an example of this type of criticism in Donna Hamilton, '*The Winter's Tale* and the Language of Union, 1604–1610', *Shakespeare Studies* 21 (1993), pp. 228-50 – where Bohemia, a land of aliens, is Scotland, and Autolicus, a vagrant and scoundrel who plays a bagpipe, a Scot.

[174] Constance C. Relihan, 'Liminal Geography: *Pericles* and the Politics of Place', *Philological Quarterly* 7 (1992), pp. 281.

the debt of Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*,[175] she notes the way Bergeron in particular explains the possible manner by which James I's family may have supplied dramatic source material akin to Shakespeare's textual sources, and how he seeks to ascertain the processes by which Shakespeare's tragicomedies contribute to the ability of James I and the nobility to signify and sanction their authority.

In analysing the geopolitical implications of the topography in works such as *Pericles*, Relihan argues for a complex relationship to Jacobean power with Shakespeare's employment of a series of transient sites around Asia Minor. Once assumed to be rather indistinct, emblematic or purely imaginary, these 'liminal' locations now take on an importance, together with the 'distancing mechanism of Gower's narrative control', that challenges readings of the play's affirmation of James I's reign and time's capacity to repair and rebuild.[176] Relihan is cautious not to create an anachronistic dichotomy between European and 'Other' cultures, seeing instead a more complex relationship between the Renaissance and ancient worlds: the ambiguous cultural links suggested by these sites (whether with classical Greek, the New Testament or the Ottoman empire then threatening seventeenth-century Christendom[177]) helped build a harsh portrait of their weak government and Pericles' abandonment of his political duties, similar, Relihan argues, to that of James I.

Building on this argument, Margaret Healy also sought to associate the plays' monarchical concerns directly with more private matters, and presented a further challenge to the perceived orthodoxy of a complimentary relationship between James I and *Pericles*, and her methodology is one of the important starting points for this thesis. Healy's investigation of what she called the 'medico-moral politics' of sexually transmitted diseases (namely the 'pox') represented in Pericles aimed to '[provide] new contexts and substantial support for more dissonant readings'.[178] Specifically, Healy argued, Pericles' blithe handing over of his daughter to the brothel frequenting governor Lysimachus at the end of the play, would have appalled contemporary audiences by seeming to reward his licentious and dangerous sexual behaviour, in an age when such diseases had more damaging medical, ethical and social implications than today (though, of course, such attitudes are always shifting).

Healy's approach uncovers a number of significant methodological strands that will be significant for this thesis. Namely the manner by which she identifies the way *Pericles* returns to an emblematic form of theatre, 'which invites spectators to search critically for understanding.'[179] What might seem mere bawdy fun to us almost certainly had a deeper import to the Post-Reformation playgoers:

---

[175] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New Edition, 1990).
[176] Relihan, 'Liminal', p. 282.
[177] Something more fully explored as part of Othello's 'Otherness': 'He is more than a stranger, he comes from a mysteriously 'other' world, a world that lies beyond our reach, hinted at rather than defined. Despite his identification with Venice and Christianity the Moor cannot shake off this mystery, a by-product of his dark skin and of the associations this had in European minds.' E.A.J. Honigmann, *Othello* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1999), p. 27.
[178] Margaret Healy, '*Pericles* and the Pox', in Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (eds), *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 95.
[179] *Ibid*., p. 97.

The audience witnesses a series of emblematic tableaux, is called upon to make sense of the wooing knights' 'devices' on their shields, and listens to riddles, mottoes and endless aphorisms, especially ones about the operations of power and kingship. … Sham, morality, hypocrisy, is repeatedly exposed. Through these theatrical structures the audience is encouraged to observe the action with a heightened sceptical consciousness, and to be especially alert to emblematic representations.[180]

Healy goes on to establish the many satirical-allegorical levels of the play, making the case for the symbolism and metaphor surrounding the Pox, fornication, corruption, and the Catholic Church, something still thriving in the early 17th Century. She is cautious to note that plays are 'slippery art forms'[181] and that in their meanings change according to each performance and response, but nonetheless correctly asserts the deep 'Jacobean cultural context' of the play's origins.

Pericles and the other tragicomedies explore issues of leadership and jurisdiction in complex ways that are related to the idea of the King's divine authority legitimised by the break with Rome: divine right monarchy is in many ways invented by Protestant culture as it allowed them access to God without going through the Papacy.[182] This will be explored fully in due course where we will see royal authority as significant for the entire nation's experience of relationships and identity: the instability of government and the royal family signifies and embodies the larger sense of the fracturing and disturbance that the Reformation ushered in.[183] Indeed, the ensuing disintegration of relationships and identities was perhaps the inevitable result of such a radical shifting of the religious landscape and was one of the Reformation's major repercussions.

The intersected religious-sexual structure of the tragicomedies will be further considered in the *Pericles* chapter in particular, but it is now necessary to consider criticism generated by these plays with regard to gender and identity, something, as I have said, that we will come to see as part of the Reformation's key ramifications.

The emotional engagements of the tragicomedies have an important gender element and, as Helen Hackett has made clear in her *Women and Tragicomedy Fiction in the English Renaissance*,[184] the assessment of tragicomedy as a more feminine genre was familiar by Shakespeare's time. The tragicomedies observe this broad practice by first of all granting dramatic weight to women: their eventual restoration by a masculine figure allows them to function powerfully as the mediators of male redemption. As emblems of virtuous fecundity and healing Nature, femininity is also a vital symbolic facet to the plays.

If the tragedies (Desdemona and Cordelia aside) present a generally negative picture of womanliness, the tragicomedies reverse this with a number of honourable and resourceful mothers and daughters. Hazlitt's description of Imogen as 'perhaps the most tender and the most artless'[185] of Shakespeare's women went a long way to set opinions, but more revisionist

---

[180] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8.
[181] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[182] In the frontispiece to the 'Great Bible' of 1540, Henry VIII represents himself as being whispered in the ear by God and the *verbum Dei* is striking him on the head.
[183] Cf. James I's reaction to the 1605 Gunpowder Plot: 'An intended destruction not only … of my person, nor of my wife and posterity also, but of the whole body of the State in general.' Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI & I* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), p. 219.
[184] Helen Hackett, *Women and Tragicomedy Fiction in the English* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[185] Darryll Grantley, *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period* (Scarecrow Press, 2013), p. 119.

readings of the tragicomedies have tended to emphasise a darker side to the depiction of women.

Of course, King Cymbeline's Queen, Dionyza of Tarsus (in *Pericles*) and *The Tempest*'s Sycorax are 'wicked' women, but operate in functional roles, practically as the 'stock' villains of fairy tale: evil step-mothers are as old as the genre. More recent critics have rather leaned towards seeing the handling of the honest women in the dramas as prescribed by male angst in relation to feminine sexual sovereignty. Ann Thompson underlined the tragicomedies' inclination to reverse the abstract truism that what is socially marginal may yet be emblematically essential.[186] Ruth Nevo recognised *Cymbeline*'s character's striving to express their personalities and determine their unresolved yearnings within their fragmented families.[187] Jodi Mikalachki[188] shared Nevo's interest with self-making in *Cymbeline* but wished to expand it to the discursive formation of an English/ British identity in Shakespeare's works, and the function of sexuality within that assembly. Hence the narrowly nationalist Queen[189] (and her female antecedents such as Boadicea) had to be extinguished, in favour of a broader and masculine internationalist outlook.

A number of the post-colonial readings of *The Tempest* explore the complex means by which colonial discourse meets with feminist ideologies, highlighting the failure of revisionists to incorporate gender and sexual oppression within racial subjugation, and in so doing conceive of a collective opposition to patriarchal dominance.[190] Sylvia Wynter sees Caliban's asexuality as indicative of the 'function of the "social pyramid" of the global order' post-1492 where slaves (supposedly) had no want for breeding.[191] Jyotsna G. Singh argues too for an empowerment of women's sexuality, alongside other resistance movements[192] – yet Miranda remains a disenfranchised object of masculine trade and possession, a destiny impervious to post colonial correctives. Even given the gender conventions of the play's origin, one might argue Miranda is actually rather forthright, standing up to and disobeying her father's instructions to visit Ferdinand and reveal her name ('My father / Is hard at study … He's safe for these three hours' and 'O my father, / I have broken your hest', III.i.19-21; 36-7).

Janet Adelman's ground-breaking psychoanalytic survey *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays* argued that post-*Hamlet* the plays all traverse 'a psychologised version of the Fall'[193] where the maternal sexualised body is not only the cradle of corruption, treachery and death, but also the font of fear over male power/

---

[186] Ann Thompson, '"Miranda, Where's Your Sister?": Reading Shakespeare's The Tempest', R.S. White (ed.) *The Tempest* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 155-66.

[187] Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 62-94.

[188] Jodi Mikalachki, 'The Masculine Tragicomedy of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46:3 (1995), pp. 301-22.

[189] Cf. The Queen's nationalistic speech in Act III.i.17-34 where she commands remembrance to past glories and defiances, as did the nationalism of Elizabeth's reign. Stirred by this patriotic entreaty, Cymbeline goes against his better judgement, and puts Britain and Rome at war.

[190] Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1992), pp. 142-58.

[191] Sylvia Wynter, 'Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un / silencing the Demonic Ground of Caliban's Woman', in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Fido (London: Africa Research and Publications, 1995), p. 360.

[192] Jyotsna G. Singh, 'Caliban versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of The Tempest', in Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kalan & Dympna Callaghan (eds), *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 207.

[193] Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 23. Adelman's is a powerful, reading of *Hamlet*: the politics taken out, it appears to follow Lawrence Olivier's 1948 film version by presenting a claustrophobic and oedipal family drama.

identity and its loss.[194] The tragicomedies are to be seen as Shakespeare's attempt to heal the wounds of the legacy of Gertrude's poisonous body (toxic to Hamlet, *père et fils*, and both their senses of identity)[195] and the loss of Hamlet's 'ideal' parents: the idealised mother is restored in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, the idealised father in *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*. Discussing *The Winter's Tale*, Adelman argues the narrative and characters need to journey away to the female pastoral in order to repair and reappraise the hallowed, life-giving maternal body, away from Leontes' delusions (themselves a grotesque distress perhaps emanating from Hermione's pregnancy and the male estrangement and potential for humiliation this intimates). As we will see, it is not impossible to envisage the break with Rome and the loss of supremacy as being embodied in much of Adelman's contention.

We saw earlier that in the first part of the twentieth century many critics regarded the visionary or fantastical characteristics of the plays and their more 'primitive' traits as proof of Shakespeare's fading powers or shirking of his commitment to the grave questions of man's existence. Others have taken those very same elements and seen them to merely serve to conceal the plays' profounder psychological meaning. In an influential essay in the late 1960s, C.L. Barber noted how in the culminations of the late tragicomedies, especially *The Winter's Tale*, much of the language is engaged with pronouncing the principals, eulogising them and augmenting their significance: transforming them into effectively sacred figures but who persist as humans.[196] Before he identifies her as his daughter, Leontes says to Perdita and Florizel:

> LEONTES: – Oh, alas!
> I lost a couple that 'twixt heaven and earth
> Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as
> You, gracious couple, do.
>   (V.i.130-133)

Ruth Nevo saw the tragicomedies' relationships with implausibility and absurdity, with the strange and the unusual, as only making sense within a dreaming world, where the text's

---

[194] Arguably, the concept has been present since Shakespeare's earliest plays: in *Henry VI, Part III* the future King Richard III laments 'Love foreswore me in my mother's womb: / And, for I should not deal in her soft laws, / She did corrupt frail Nature with some bribe' (III.ii.153-55).

[195] By presenting the closet scene (III.iv) so that Hamlet sees the ghost but Gertrude does not, Shakespeare deepens the rotten dichotomy of identity and loss:

GERTRUDE:	To whom do you speak this?
HAMLET:	Do you see nothing there?
GERTRUDE:	Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.
HAMLET:	Nor did you nothing hear?
GERTRUDE:	No, nothing but ourselves. (cont. …)

(III.iv.127-31)

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare carries further the sense of identity's loss and the power of 'nothing'. The Fool goads Lear: 'Thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle', and then: 'thou art an O without a figure; I am better than thou art now. I am a fool, thou art nothing' (I.iv.177-9, 183-5). So, after jesting with several meanings of the term, the Fool diminishes Lear irrevocably to nothing. In *King Lear* the word 'nothing' communicates more than just an austere temporal emptiness: Cordelia's modest reply 'Nothing, my Lord' (I.i.80) suggests an internal as well as exterior significance.

[196] C.L. Barber, '"Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget": Transformation in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969), pp. 59-67.

unconscious can be retrieved and fully understood.[197] The sexual repression we saw Nevo allude to earlier is central here and forms an important aspect of the generally dark subtext to the many dysfunctional families seen in these plays: a troubling reversal of the glorification of the royal family the historicists – old and new – wanted to ascribe to these plays.

The fragmentation and guilt that the plays explore, particularly when associated with the Reformation cauldron from which they were born, has caused some recent critics to re-seek a redemptive aspect to them, albeit one that does not involve the more extreme elements of Christian allegory, as G. Wilson Knight employed.

As Russ McDonald has recently pointed out in *Shakespeare's Late Style* (2010), 'the plays of this period have resisted most critical efforts to account for their attraction and theatrical power.'[198] Simon Palfrey, too, has argued that the 'critical approach to [the tragicomedies] in recent years has remained basically allegorical, only now with the ambition of discovering specific, local, topical sources.'[199] Indeed, for Palfrey the critical tradition has been too demure in regarding these plays as courtly escapism. Yet, if we suppose to read three of Shakespeare's tragicomedies through the historical lenses of the Reformation we must take care, as Palfrey has put it, 'with due attention both to shifting terrain, and our own steps upon it.'[200]

---

[197] Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (New York & London: Methuen, 1987).
[198] Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 1.
[199] Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 5.
[200] Simon Palfrey, 'Macbeth and Kierkegaard', *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (2004), p. 111.

CHAPTER THREE

Sacred Stages: Church and Theatre
Before and After the Reformation

Shakespeare's world — its topography, its culture, its day-to-day cadences — was still predominantly a medieval Christian[201] one, however gradually more altered and conflicted that world had become in the post-Reformation period. Streets and buildings retained their parish structure and the ferocity of contemporary doctrinal debate did not immediately eradicate the populace's deep-rooted religious beliefs or behaviour. London and Londoners – like the rest of the country – retained many of the religious and geographic configurations from its long history; even in the cosmopolitan capital, times were slow to change or forget the past, whatever the official religion was sanctioned to be.[202]

The efficacious self-promoting of humanists and reformers, and their often oversimplifying condemnation of medieval[203] mediocrity in order to present themselves as original and distinct, can blind us to their own continuance with the past: art, architecture, philosophy and theology (Classical, Christian, or both) were not reborn in the early modern 'Renaissance', but had endured throughout the Middle Ages. Early modern culture was not produced by resurrecting classical antiquity but was created through its relationship with the more recent and embedded medieval precedent. This is not to suggest that early modern thinkers and writers were lacking originality; it is simply that we need to recalibrate the starting point of their inventiveness. Moreover, our vocabulary 'medieval' and 'early modern' is now frequently evaluative rather than merely descriptive: the terms have become unhelpful chronological labels and capricious encumbrances on the course of time, not only now conveying value judgements (to be modern is improving; medieval, relapsing),[204] but partitioning too straightforwardly historical phases with substantial intersection.

Change the Reformation did bring, but it took a number of decades to establish itself, and was attended by simultaneous (and foregoing) renovations and restorations in religion and culture (if those phenomena can be regarded in this period as separate categories) that maintained their links more closely with the past. The Church of England was organized and

---

[201] Even London comprised just a few Jews or Muslims, but perhaps because of their rarity they had a vigorous stimulus on the imagination of many writers, as shaped prominently in *The Jew of Malta*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, but also: *The Three Ladies of London* (c.1584); *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612); *The Island Princess* (c.1619-21); *The Renegado* (1624); *The Jews' Tragedy* (c.1626). Cf. Lisa Hopkins, 'Gerontus and Early Modern Dramatic Representations of Jews', paper given at 'Performance as Research in Early English Theatre Studies: *The Three Ladies of London* in Context', McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 23-25 June 2015; Daryl W. Palmer, 'Merchants and Miscegenation: *The Three Ladies of London*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Merchant of Venice*', in: Joyce Green MacDonald, ed., *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996); Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

[202] See: Stephen Porter, *Shakespeare's London: Everyday Life in London, 1580-1616* (London: Amberley Publishing, 2011); Catharine Arnold, *Globe: Life in Shakespeare's London* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2015); Hannah Crawforth, Jennifer Young & Sarah Dustagheer (eds), *Shakespeare in London* (London: Arden Publishing, 2015). James Shapiro's two studies of particular years in Shakespeare's life are also fascinating portraits of London life: *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005) and *1606: The Year of Lear* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

[203] Though they did not coin the term 'medieval', they frequently called the 'period' preceding theirs barbaric.

[204] If, to take two prominent examples, universities and civil liberties are considered distinguishing components of the 'modern' world, we should remember their legacy from the Middle Ages.

systematized in innumerable ways by its Catholic past. As Helen Cooper has suggested, 'consciousness … works with memory much more than with prediction. The Elizabethans knew what there was in their world and what had been there before, not what was going to happen next, and their own memories were supplemented by what their parents had told them.'[205]

This chapter will consider first the religious landscape of before and during Shakespeare's England, particularly the daily and routine ways religion shaped people's lives. It will then assess the state and status of the early modern play, particularly through a consideration of its development from the theatre of the medieval drama, evaluating the rapport between these two institutions, the anti-theatricalism and anti-clericalism of the period.

The period of Shakespeare's lifespan was one of reasonable religious stability in terms of the outlooks and observations of his respective sovereigns. Elizabeth had a calculated discretion in public, though in private possessed a crucifix in her personal chapel, disobeying her own Church's (Calvinist-modulated) approved stance on images and ornamentation. Her successor James VI/I held a largely Calvinist attitude, took a deep personal interest in theology and his position as head of the Church, and sought to 'achieve a religious reconciliation among Christians of many persuasions – English Protestants, Lutherans, Calvinists, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox.'[206] The ecumenical instincts of England's monarchs cannot, however, conceal the intramural rifts within the Anglican Church, the external threats, or the long memory of religious zigzags under Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary.

In the eyes of the government, Pius V's official expulsion of Elizabeth in 1570 made all Catholics prospective threats to the realm. Earlier, the 1559 Act of Supremacy and later, following the botched Gunpowder Plot of 1605, James' Oath of Allegiance (1606), made explicit condemnation of papal deposing power:

> I, A.B. do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify, and declare in my conscience before God and the world, that our Sovereign Lord King James, is lawful and rightful King of this realm, and of all other in his Majesties Dominions and Countries; And that the Pope neither of himself, nor by any authorities of the Church or See of Rome, or by any means with any other hath any power or authority to depose the King, or to dispose any of his Majesty's kingdoms, or dominions, or to authorize any foreign prince to invade or annoy him, or his countries, or to discharge any of his Subjects of their allegiance and obedience to his Majesty, or to give any license or leave to any of them to bear arms, raise tumult, or to offer any violence, or hurt to his Majesty's royal person, state, or government, or to any of his Majesty's subjects within his Majesty's dominions.[207]

This official line from government meant that Catholic ecclesiastics could be put to death and uncompromising penalizations incurred by those recusants not in attendance at Anglican

---

[205] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Publishing, 2010), p. 4.

[206] W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. ix.

[207] "An Act for the better discovering and repressing of Popish recusants; 3 & 4 James I c. 4, 1606". Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. Available at: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/the-english-parliament-under-james-i-oath-of-allegiance-an-act-for-the-better-discovering-and-repressing-of-popish-recusants-on-rejecting-papal-authority-to-depose-the-king. Accessed 13th January 2017.

church services, even if many richer Catholics could experience a qualified freedom in their private beliefs and practices. It is here that the discrepancy between top-down, government-led religious positioning, and the lived experience of faith for the populace, is most in evidence.

Eamon Duffy's revisionary *The Stripping of the Altars*[208] was a key work in reconstructing the healthy position of the Catholic faith in England in the period prior to and immediately following the Reformation, writing as a counterpoint to the then predominant historical conviction that the Roman Catholic faith in England was a crumbling power, theologically expended and incapable of offering satisfactory spiritual nourishment for the population at large. Accommodating a wide-ranging body of evidence (rood screens, stained glass, church graffiti, accounts, wills, primers, memoirs, and so on), Duffy maintains that all facets of religious life preceding the Reformation were executed with a well-meant devotion and piety. Feast days and holy days were enjoyably observed, abstinences gravely heeded, churches richly decorated, images worshipped, and prayers for the dead habitually recounted. Pre-Reformation Catholicism was, he argues, a profoundly popular religion, followed by all social branches. Duffy contests earlier historians' assertions that English religious practice was growing to be more individualised (with different layers of society having fundamentally diverse religious lives), stipulating the enduring corporate character of the late medieval Church, in which every member was knowingly and freely part of a single organization.

At the centre of late medieval religious life was the marvel of the Mass, the making afresh of the redemption of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, presented anew in the form of his body and blood in the physical form of bread and wine on the altar.[209] For both clergy and laity this was a fundamental sacred act, but one that was also a regular and popular occasion for communal and social activity. It had its central position together with a not inconsiderable federation of offices constructed both for the annual seasons and an individual's own existence. Life in the medieval period was decidedly liturgical, assembled for clerical use in a variety of books such as the missal and breviary: the former containing the instructions and texts for the year's Masses; the latter, an anthology of daily offices such as prayers, readings, and rites. In England, liturgy could be extremely diocesan across the regions, as well as varying throughout the diverse religious orders.[210] (The Act of Supremacy in 1534, detaching England from Rome, did not immediately disturb liturgical life: Henry VIII himself continued to marry and worship in the same way.)

For Duffy there has been an assumption in much of the earlier study that it was a relatively uncomplicated movement from the deteriorating Catholicism to the more ethically unsullied and serviceable Protestantism. The question then persists as to how, given this popularity, the centuries of amassed convention were removed so apparently quickly. Duffy proposes a number of salient rationalizations such as the political power of a confrontational, belligerent Protestant ministry embarking on inspections to England's parishes, as well as the influence of successive monarchs' personal religious views upon public conduct. Moreover, while Catholics had the competency of dissenting in opposition to laws and edicts (such as

---

[208] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (1992; London: Yale University Press, New and Revised Edition, 2005).
[209] *Ibid.*, pp. 91-130.
[210] Richard Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially chapters 12-14.

the Prayer Book Rebellion in the summer of 1549) it was challenging for such insurgence to be prolonged.

Duffy charts how society reacted to modifications in religious practice as the accelerated implementation of Protestantism in the mid and later 16th Century took place. He discloses a progression of archives, registers, notes, and images that discretely divulge a mixture of adjustments to customs and measures against physical parts of churches that collectively express a significant transformation in English religious practice. Thus, we witness how walls are whitewashed; rood screens vandalized and dismantled; church plate and candlesticks smelted and vended; altars removed; chasubles and other vestments unpicked; relics disposed of and paintings of the saints secreted in congregations' dwellings. Guild groups and distinct regional feast days, as well as other features of the Catholic community, swiftly disintegrate starved of the economic or religious practices upon which they were contingent. An aggressive, centralist operation created widespread bewilderment and disappointment, the relative bleakness of everyday life aggravated through the removal of familiar spiritual sustenance.[211]

For people of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, the church was the central hub of the community, both architecturally and socially: the ceremonies within its walls shaped both day-to-day experience and administered the phases of life through routine daily services or the major sacraments and rites of passage as baptism, marriage or funerals. Yet, whatever damage was done to the interior enrichments and adornments of churches in the iconoclastic maltreatments under successive regimes, a remarkable quantity endured, partially or intact. Observing the apparently unpunished purging of superstitious agglomeration in their churches and abbeys, some might have converted to the new faith; but just as many would be as likely overcome with sorrow and nostalgia at the loss, whether because of strong religious conviction of merely imaginative consideration for their world and its past.

How far then can we regard Shakespeare's lifetime as culturally and aesthetically diminished, in religious terms? Certainly, there can be no doubt of the destruction wrought on medieval religious objects and relics, yet Brian Cummings and Alexandra Walsham's important work has examined the increased accessibility of printed scripture in this period as enriching culture across denominational lines with expanded literacy, so that a more comprehensive text-centred familiarity of the Bible became viable on a large scale, even if it subsequently stayed beyond the reach of many.[212] Biblical narratives and scriptural lessons, familiar in the Middle Ages, now had the potential to become more firmly engrained, something the Church accentuated as a Christian virtue to be desired.

Religious publications formed the majority of matter printed between 1475 and 1640 and the Bible and other scriptures would have been cited, rephrased and construed across a range of doctrinal standpoints and literary forms, the secular drama included.[213] Shakespeare and his contemporaries make extensive use of religious material, principally the Bible, in a variety of translations and variations – for Shakespeare, the Geneva Bible (1557-60) seems

[211] Duffy's *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London: Yale University Press, 2001) spotlights how one Devon village responded to these vicissitudes.

[212] Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700* (London: Routledge, 2014); Alexandra Walsham, '"Domme Preachers": Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print', *Past and Present* 168:1 (2000), pp. 72-123.

[213] A. Walsham, P. Collinson & A. Hunt, 'Religious Publishing in England, 1557-1640', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. IV, 1557-1695*, eds, J. Barnard, D. F. McKenzie & M. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

his most usual reference point,[214] along with the earlier Great Bible (1539) and later so-called Bishops' Bibles (1568; 1572; 1602). Citations or insinuations from these texts altered and morphed not only because translators habitually appropriated from one other, but also as part of both the creative process and particular dramatic circumstances concerned, something extensively discoursed in recent studies by Steven Marx, Naseeb Shaheen, Maurice Hunt and Chris Hassel.[215]

Having this scriptural knowledge in one's own tongue was certainly expedient, and one of the reformers' principal ambitions, yet biblical translation was not confined to Protestant groups. Eamon Duffy has argued[216] that an English Bible would have come to pass in due course within the structure of pre-Reformation Catholicism, and that the Carthusian prior Nicholas Love's (c. 1400) translation of Pseudo-Bonaventura's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (*Meditationes Vitae Christi*), with its anti-Lollard appendix on the Blessed Sacrament, mostly fulfilled lay requirements for the New Testament.[217] More than a translation, Love's *Mirror* expanded the Franciscan original with polemical additions to Wycliffite attitudes to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and formed part of Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions* prohibiting any new biblical translations unless approved by the local bishop. Duffy's position has been criticised in David Daniell's 2001 biography of Tyndale, claiming that Love's book actually contains very little of Christ's ideas and a large quantity of fabricated substance not in the Gospels:

> The Church would never permit a complete printed New Testament in English from the Greek, because in that New Testament can be found neither the Seven Sacraments nor the doctrine of purgatory, two chief sources of the Church's power … An elementary working knowledge of the Bible, the ultimate root of the Christian faith, could only have been developed within Protestantism … [Catholic] piety and practice, in many ways admirable, we must reply, was imprisoned in a little world of recent Church tradition, while the vast continents of historic Bible revelation, towered over by the mountain range of Paul's theology, were forbidden territory … during the English Reformation, lay men and women were so hungry for the Bible in English that they were often prepared to die for it. Nobody was burned alive for *The Little Hours of the Virgin*. There were nine printed editions of Love up to 1530, and none after, as Tyndale's New Testaments arrived. [218]

Assessing these contentions one ought to take into account the degree to which portions of the Bible had been translated into English well prior to the 16th Century, in addition to the

---

[214] See: John Velz, 'Shakespeare and the Geneva Bible: The Circumstances', in Takashi Tozuka & J.R. Mulryne, eds, *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson: New Directions in Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[215] Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (1999; Revised edition: Newark, DA: Delaware University Press, 2002); Maurice Hunt, *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness: Its Play and Tolerance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); R. Chris Hassel, Jr., *Shakespeare's Religious Language: A Dictionary* (2005; London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[216] Duffy, *Stripping*, 'The Coming of Print', pp. 77-87.

[217] Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ, a Reading Text*, ed. Michael Sargent (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp. 223-39.

[218] David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 96-100.

biblical education and scriptural messages communicated through the religious drama that developed throughout the Middle Ages (as we shall see). Moreover, the popularity of the numerous configurations of the *Devotio Moderna*, which encompassed the interpretation of scripture, praying with the Psalms, and such works as Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* (c.1418-27; first translated from Latin into English in the mid-fifteenth century) in the period antecedent to the Reformation, as well as the voluminous sermons and homilies illuminating sanctified texts, demonstrate the level to which the Bible's instruction extended to the average soul.

Love's polemical embellishments transmit to us some of the anxious orthodox reaction to vernacular heresy, yet it is doubtful that Lollardy had a 'sufficiently deep or wide hold over the laity as a whole to justify a rereading of the remarkable catechetical and devotional achievements of the fifteenth-century church, simply or primarily in terms of its response to heresy',[219] not least because England in this period did not have the resources or infrastructure required for a theocratic police-state, so that the denunciation of Lollardy by Arundel's 1409 *Constitutions* did not muzzle English religious writing for a century, as Nicholas Watson has claimed.[220] Traditional viewpoints to vernacular sacred literature was a long way from being homogeneously hostile, and intermittent resumptions of Church apprehension about Lollards and other perceived heresies seem generally to be more troubled with ignorance than heterodoxy. Movements towards religious writing in English need not only be identified with the reformers so that the late medieval Church in England was still a burgeoning and popular institution, conscious of the need to educate and inform its flock in its own language, with the transference towards Protestantism initially the occupation of a small minority with only a limited reach. This diminutive group nonetheless had a deep impact so that when the Reformation did take hold it represented a profound and shocking cultural interruption to English society. Yet if popular support for Protestantism under Henry VIII was minor, nonetheless, by the end of his daughter Elizabeth's long reign in 1603, 'the way the English worshipped [underwent] a sea change',[221] with all the broader cultural and philosophical transformations this brings about.

Brian Cummings' work on the role and place of the Book of Common Prayer in English life has afforded the opportunity to see more clearly how non-biblical liturgical texts in particular influenced playwrights in particular and culture in general – not least the way it could be used to demand citizens' allegiance. Moreover, the Prayer Book has the potential to reveal religion as a 'much bigger, less private, and less sanctimonious phenomenon'[222] than we might suppose, chronicling new human remembrance and meaning, and showing the penetration of ritual influence in everyday life and the culture that surrounded it. It is vital lens to comprehend the vicissitudes of the age.

As with nearly all liturgical texts, the Book drew its mandate from a self-assembled miscellany of ancient sources, which would from the start trigger controversies at both ends

---

[219] Duffy, *Stripping*, p. xxix

[220] Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval Vernacular Theology', *Speculum* 70 (1995), pp. 822-64.

[221] Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), p. 2.

[222] Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. xii. See also: Prudence Dailey, *The Book of Common Prayer: Past, Present, Future* (London: Continuum Press, 2011); Alan Jacobs, *The 'Book of Common Prayer': A Biography* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2013); Diarmaid Macculloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).

of the religious spectrum: announced by Parliament to institute an 'Act of Uniformity' in 1549, its actual consequence was far from it. The medieval source material upon which much of it was constructed caused many Puritans to deem it inadequately reformed;[223] for Catholics, the very fact that it omitted so much that was so precious to them, meant it was at best a sorrowful read, and at worst an affront.[224]

The Book of Common Prayer was both a symptom of the Reformation and a facilitator for additional transformations; a printed object with a tremendously complex textual history, there were more than 350 different imprints prior to the date often referred to as the 'first' edition of 1662.[225] This quantitative fact tells us something of the immense and contentious significance of the book, and the numerous alterations it went through across the decades.[226] The Reformation's succession of individual, collective, and public changes shattered the framework of day-to-day life; in the process it 'created the conditions for extraordinary kinds of piety, literary creativity, and philosophical originality.'[227] The Book of Common Prayer, in its first editions and by means of its pertinacious supposition of doctrinal idiosyncrasy and obliteration of the traditional ways of holy experience and activity, was an instrument of great change and resentment, instigating insurrections and uprisings after being foisted upon worshippers. (By the 1640s, the book would be judged by many as a remainder of Catholicism, with excessively ostentatious veneration ceremonials, the rituals of genuflecting and crossing.)

Cranmer's Book of 1549 was intended as a radical and controversial text, self-consciously reversing the past, even as it paradoxically safeguarded centuries of tradition through its English rendition of liturgy from the Latin; it was not perhaps quite the 'new' book its makers and publicists claimed, and might even be regarded as a 'kind of sacred parody or even travesty (in the strict sense) of an old ritual.'[228] It many ways it was 'too elaborate and fixed; it preserved the ghost of the ordered liturgical world of saints' days and prescribed recitations.'[229] The 1662 edition, on the other hand, was a methodical endorsement of cultural healing, repairing foregoing discord through textual corrections and rectifications (and a version that has largely lasted through to the present day).

Experiencing the book for the first time, most of its users in 1549 and beyond would have been shocked: though appropriated from the very Catholic practice it was meant to oust, every amendment and lacuna from the the Latin original (not to mention the very use of English at all), would have jarred as a disruption to a deep-rooted convention. There was a twelve-monthly progression of festivals and penitence, an accretion of words and images,

---

[223] Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, eds, *The Culture of English Puritanism: 1560-1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2007). On defining Puritanism, see: Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Later Reformation in England: 1547-1603* (London: Palgrave, 1990), pp. 69-78. For later Puritan attitudes, see: Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[224] Philip Caraman, *The Western Rising 1549: The Prayer Book Rebellion* (Tiverton: Westcountry Books, 1994); Eamon Duffy, *Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London: Yale University Press, 2001); Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[225] Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. xiii.

[226] See: Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 239-41.

[227] Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. xiii.

[228] *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

[229] Dairmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 383.

physical and spiritual enactments, all focused on the phenomenon of the Mass, the imperative deed of late medieval religious activity.

On the continent, in 1523, Luther had created a prototype kind of liturgy – the *Formula Missae et Communionis* – in Latin, but criticizing the Mass; three years later the *Deutsche Messe* was available to Germans in their own language, along with numerous other vernacular religious texts for church services that appeared all the time. Zwingli, Bucer and Calvin's own reformations similarly produced new liturgies. Yet it was not restricted to Protestantism: a modified breviary was ordered and authorized by Pope Clement VII in 1535, with a comprehensive revamp to the Roman liturgy prepared in 1570 after the Council of Trent, ubiquitously preferring a simplification and standardizing of practice, as well as some new stances on music and visual manifestations.[230]

The infancy of the new king – Edward VI – in 1547, provided impetus to those zealous reformers frustrated by the late sovereign's doctrinally limited reforms: Henry VIII, for all his distrust and abhorrence of the papacy, stayed committed to much of the conventional structures of Catholicism. We saw earlier the extent to which in much of the general populace, traditional religion – with only a slight openness for novelty – held sway as well. Changing the language (and hence the words) of prayers was an anxious change: would the prayer still be successful? As Brian Cummings has argued, 'this should not be dismissed as superstition: all ritual … involves saying the right words in the right order and in the right place and circumstances.'[231] One of the Reformation's key apprehensions was with the power and status of words, how far they could change ourselves and our world, as well as their relationship with the world(s) to come. Thus, the new religion was to be focused on the word, setting itself forth as a faith grounded in sacred, canonical texts and the proselytization of an enlightening, civilising set of principles. A vital part of this was a belief that the more physical or material aspects of religion had to be eliminated — hence the disgust of particular varieties of ritual: images, saints, bells, elaborate vestments, and the 1547 Injunctions' desire to destroy them. Yet, not only was the Catholic liturgy verbal by definition, and reinforced by recurrent homilies and edifying discourses, but it is also problematical to unequivocally divorce the verbal and non-verbal aspects of religion. Thus, the new cultural partitions overstated and embellished such distinctions via the progressively ferocious means we saw earlier.

Cranmer's 1549 Prayer Book, for all its doctrinal delicacy and literary dexterity, pleased no one fully, something particularly discernible in the key act of worship: Communion. For traditional Catholics it was a travesty, denying the elevation of the host and muffling the corporeal manifestation of Christ in the elements of the Mass. Yet, for Protestant reformers, too much ceremonial exhibition was preserved. Certainly, any notion of a nationwide religious agreement was a total pretence: protests erupted, first in the south west, then spread to other parts.

Doctrinal debate continued and Cranmer embraced the chance to refine his liturgical objectives, giving rise to the (as it turned out) transitory 1552 edition, which sought to make entirely absolute what was hitherto implicit. A far more drastically Protestant version, 1552 was more verbal and less visual, and one that tried to permanently stamp out Catholicism by abolishing especially 'material' aspects such as prostration before the host, benediction of

---

[230] Carlos M. N. Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650* (London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 367-441; Martin Jones, *The Counter Reformation: Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 322-331.
[231] Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, p.xxiii. Cf. Cummings, *Mortal*, pp. 210-11.

the font water, or praying for the dead under any conditions. All manual acts and vestments were omitted: the final phase of the reformers' efforts to eliminate rudiments of sacrificial offering from the Latin Mass, so that it should stop being perceived as a ritual at which the priest, on behalf of the faithful, offered Christ's body to God. The short-lived 1552 Book of Common Prayer offered a more radical aesthetic of piety, and represented a neoteric model of Christian worship: one which constructively accentuated repentance and thanksgiving, but which also professed an abhorrence to the sacramental/ ritual features of the past.

Edward's early death at fifteen in 1553 allowed his half-sister Mary to immediately rescind the book whilst also re-establishing altars, statues and rood screens.[232] The developing but arrested Marian Catholicism in England disclosed how a systematic Protestant Reformation touched a reinstated traditional Church. For example, under Mary's administration, church lectern Bibles were confiscated, but the medieval complete ban on the Bible in English was not re-established: some mechanisms from the past appeared problematic to revive. By 1558 Mary was dead and the course shifted once more. Governing one of the most desperately divided kingdoms in Europe, Elizabeth strove for conciliation but prevaricated, the compromise resulting in a framework for centuries of tension and hostility, even if history has tended to regard the Elizabethan reign as one of religious resolution and 'settlement'.

The Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 though tremendously revolutionary texts were quickly repealed; the 1559 edition constructed attitudes for over a century, with only partial vagaries in 1604 after James' succession,[233] establishing a crucial existential arrangement for generations to come. Part of this is the 'performative' nature of the new edition, the ways the 'rubrics which bring it into social reality … frequently [taking] us to the heart of religious devotion. Religion is not only a matter of the right words, but the right words said in the right way using the right objects in the right order.'[234] The Book of Common Prayer can be commodiously exact on style of a particular rite or ritual, yet also become ponderously reticent or even mute, necessitating a reading between the lines. Music was an area of characteristically circuitous reference when it came to performance. In many ways it was now considerably simplified and a far-reaching distinction advanced between, on the one hand, parish worship where only the metrical psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins might be sung and, on the other, worship in churches with organs and surviving choral foundations, where the music of John Marbeck and others was established into a fertile choral tradition.[235] Singing the psalms afforded an uncommon opportunity for congregational involvement in services, and the Psalms were the biblical book more recited in a liturgical setting than any other: as with most poetry, referring to only one section might bring to mind an entire passage.[236]

Perhaps, then, more than doctrine or theology, the new boundaries of belief seemed to be over performance and ceremonies, explicable in part by the linking of episcopacy and sovereignty in England via the Acts of Supremacy (1534; 1558), exceptional among Protestant

---

[232] Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); David M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553–58* (London & New York: Longman, 1991).

[233] Involving baptism by women, and baptism and confirmation for infants.

[234] Cummings, Book, p. xxxiv.

[235] Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding their Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 31.

[236] John Craig, 'Psalms, Groans and Dog-Worshippers: The Soundscape of Worship in the English Parish Church, 1547-1642', in Andrew Spicer & Will Coster, eds, *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

churches. Disagreement with the bishops became practically the same as treason versus the monarch, and the apparently esoteric or minor worries over church interior design or the clerical wardrobe here develop into meaningful vistas of dissent in a paranoid, eavesdropping realm. Words, though powerful, can be evasive; furniture, fixtures or fittings are less equivocal.

Many ordinary Elizabethans — and their local ministers – grudgingly toed the line to a religion now left without outward signs and spiritual comforts they had inherited and become used to.[237] Yet these became more and more distant with each year and generation, in addition to numerous wider identity crises that continued to preoccupy the old Church throughout Europe: had the Council of Trent delivered all the solutions about how the Church should be administered, and how it occasioned both doctrinal and practical judgements? In England, enormous sacrifices (and, sometimes, privilege and opportunity) sustained Catholicism, necessary given the government aspiration to extinguish the practice of Catholicism, if not Catholics themselves. By the turn of the century and the end of Elizabeth's reign, English Catholicism could be said to have 'fossilized as a largely upper-class and faintly exotic set'.[238]

On the other side, Puritans derided the compromises that were allowed to be observed (kneeling for Communion; the matrimonial ring).[239] During the 1570s demonstrations and other public activism indicated the amount of displeasure amid the Protestant political nation, while the Queen 'forced her bishops into disciplining clergy who would not conform to the details of her 1559 Settlement.'[240] By around 1600 Puritanism appeared to have forsaken its ambition of altering the established configurations of the Church in England. Many augmented their statutory church attendance (especially when they thought the local priest's ministry insufficient or inadequate) by 'sermon-gadding'[241] – attending sermons outside one's own parish – and private home Bible study. Priority was given to the individual soul and its journey as one of God's designate. English Puritans, as we shall see in relation to the theatre, were both confined and influential within the late Elizabethan/ early Stuart Church, enduring as an essential aspect of its Protestant life.

With Elizabeth's demise, and James VI/I's succession, only minor changes were made to the text of the Prayer Book; however, the exterior trappings and trimmings of church services did begin to change and heralded the early stages of a new religious cultivation. A reaffirmation of veneration, concentrated on the Communion, was led by clerics such as Lancelot Andrewes.[242] He found the Reformed doctrine of predestination forbidding and

---

[237] Lisa McLain, 'Without church, cathedral or shrine: the search for religious space among Catholics in England, 1559-1625', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002), pp. 381-99; Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (London: Boydell Press, 1999); Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[238] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 393.

[239] Issues potentially staged in *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Othello* respectively. Cf. Brian Cummings, 'Shakespeare and the Reformation', 2012 address to the British Academy, London. (An audio recording and draft text of the lecture is available at: http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2012/Cummings-shakespeare.cfm. Accessed: 19th March 2017.)

[240] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 383.

[241] Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 471.

[242] While Peter McCullough's biography of Andrewes remains forthcoming, several of his articles thoroughly elucidate this distinctive and intriguing figure of Jacobean life: Peter McCullough, 'Andrewes: Liturgy, Music & Sermon', in Alec Ryrie & Natalie Mears, eds, *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern England* (Ashgate: Routledge, 2012); Peter McCullough, 'Lancelot Andrewes's Transforming Passions', *Huntington Library Quarterly*

unaccommodating, preferring to locate a sensual enchantment with God's cosmos and stressing the Eucharist as the decisive bounty of creation, whilst underlining the function of human intelligence in seizing the truths of the Christian faith. With their more decorative and erudite style of speaking, preachers like Andrewes had been held back by Elizabeth's bishops (indeed, many had despondently converted to Catholicism), but found favour with the new administration. In the early years of the 17th Century, an internal piety became re-associated with an external worship, so that religious buildings began to reacquire more opulent interiors that could be considered as the emblem of an emotionally driven, affective pietism.

In many ways the English Reformation and the Church had always sought to distance itself from that occurring in continental Europe: disconcerting or immoderate interpretations (such as an iconoclastic Protestantism or understated view of the complexion of the Mass) could each time be put down to foreign interference (i.e. Luther, Calvin, Bucer, et al.), and indeed were first voiced by Catholic campaigners criticising the Church from without, as well as those later moderates committed to restructuring it from within.

*

Shakespeare's expansive scriptural and liturgical frame of reference makes use of contemporary debates and nostalgic memories of antiquated material, telling us something of the rich and fertile religious culture he and his audiences were girdled by, even if not everyone would see this density of religious loci as a good thing, especially when discoursed in the playhouses of London. The growth in printing and literacy might have been a boon to inventive playwrights and enterprising theatre managers (and their prospective clientele),[243] but late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England was – as we have indicated, in part because of the developing text-based culture – a multifaceted and heterogeneous society, with innumerable attitudes to religion and the arts, as well as the interaction between the two.

To some extent, we can see pulpit and stage, preacher and players, in healthy competition in this period.[244] Both sermon and play banked on making the most of the effect and authority of scripture, and both required an extensive, detailed recollection of religious material (at least from their more erudite auditors). Perhaps more vitally, for all that we have seen print culture advancing rapidly in this period, most sermons and plays remained orally communicated so that the words spoken in both played on the distinctive affiliation between religious text and believer as they heard them.

Motivation was, as one might expect, very different, for all the shared terrain: a cleric in the pulpit had obviously evangelical and edifying purposes for his allusions; an actor on the stage might be referencing religion for several ends – whether as a multi-purpose moralism, characterization, perhaps simply as an embellishment and beautification of the speech's language, or as a topical allusion supported by scripture. (In the opening scene of *Coriolanus*, probably written in the wake of the 1607 Midland Revolt,[245] the First Citizen beseeches the

71:4 (December 2008), pp. 573-589; Peter McCullough, 'Lancelot Andrewes and Language', *Anglican Theological Review* 74 (1992).

[243] Richard Dutton, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially part one; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[244] See: Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[245] A series of agrarian protests in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1607 against the enclosure of previously open-field farming units into financially lucrative outsized zones of hedged-off sheep

crowd 'You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?' (I.i.3-4) Such a preference was recurrent in sermons preached in times of scarcity and drought, and has an obviously biblical sentiment to it. In 1596 William Barlow published a translation of the Zurich minister Lavater's *Three Christian Sermons of Famine and Dearth of Victuals*: 'Verie true is that speech of Jeremy [i.e., Jeremiah], It was better with them that they were slaine with the sword, then with them that died for hunger' (*cf.* Book of Jeremiah, 44:12).[246])

Historians and literary scholars have become more conscious of the significance of the communication of ideas and practices within religious culture, particularly involving the clerical 'producer' and the lay 'consumer', and the interaction between preacher and congregant. By the end of the 16th Century many ministers like the Puritan Thomas Cartwright saw preaching as the central way to bring people to faith, hearing the Word elucidated and decoded: 'there is no salvation without preaching' he pronounced.[247] Less radical conformists like John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1583-1604, chose to stress the studying of scripture and homilies, maintaining they were just as indispensable as receiving a sermon. During the later part of Shakespeare's life and beyond, the acute division between a preaching and a reading ministry had become more relaxed, and written and spoken words were regarded as two functions of a consistent initiative, not least because so many sermons were printed and then read: committing words to a page increases your potential audience, as well as explanatory capacity. Many sermon-goers would of course, however zealous their commitment to the practice, tire. The Puritan artisan and chronicler Nehemiah Wallington on one occasion succeeded in packing nineteen sermons into a week, an extraordinary attainment, but even he fought now and then to concentrate, finding himself closely scrutinizing the hour glass, later confessing he had 'many times slept at Church hearing of God's word'.[248] It was hard work, but listening to sermons was a crucial aspect of Early Modern religious experience, especially for Protestants. Arnold Hunt has carried out invaluable work on the audience that heard sermons and how they were received, despite there being little immediate evidence for either. Instructive manuals were used, intended to demonstrate to people how to hear – and remember – a sermon. Their efficacy is indistinct, but they do signpost an importance given to the essential value of sermons and preaching generally. Hunt also argues persuasively that the 'sermon-gadding' of Puritans we saw earlier – attending sermons outside one's own parish – was becoming more commonplace,[249] especially in London where in effect a relatively free market of unrestricted competition was in operation, people showing up to sermons they found particularly inspiring, or just plain entertaining.

Responding to the revisionist claims of Keith Thomas, Christopher Haigh and J.J. Scarisbrick, that the insipidness of Protestant preaching can account for much of the failure of the Reformation, with listeners heckling the speaker, hastening to the alehouse at the moment of its conclusion, and being attracted to the charms of magical belief, Hunt argues that many preachers sought closer relationships with their audience. They could gravely remind them of the judgement to come, but also connect with the values of community and

---

pasture – a practice that entailed scarcer jobs for agricultural labourers, as well as fewer acres assigned to grain production. See: Eric Kerridge, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After* (1969; London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 94-133; Lee Bliss, ed., *Coriolanus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 17-27.
[246] Bliss, *Coriolanus*, p. 118n.
[247] Hunt, *Hearing*, p. 32.
[248] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[249] *Ibid.*, pp. 187-228.

charity that continued to inform the experience of religion for many. Agreeing with Eamon Duffy's reassessment[250] of the positive popular reception to much *Protestant* culture, Hunt proposes that by means of sermons we can comprehend how ministers amalgamated their fervent consciousness of the chasm between the elect and the degenerate with their dedication to social order and coherence, even if these pressures were enacted in a different way in each community: the 'threads of community between pre- and post-Reformation culture', and the polarized Catholic and Protestant, can in fact be regarded as 'expressions of a common religious impulse.'[251]

Hunt insists upon the context and audience of each sermon, one person's words meaning something quite different to the another's; some discourses were intended to reproach and agitate, others appease and encourage. Sermons, as with theatre presentations, were unique performances, situated within a specific place and time, however much we might view them contained by broader culture. Like plays, they could be subject to revision or collaboration, or were simply repeated virtually unchanged.

Playwrights' creative connections and frequently syncretic approach to religion (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* assimilates evidences of medieval Catholicism and classical mythology, as well as Britain's home-grown faery folklore) differ vividly to the world outside the theatre, where division was more often emphasized rather than overcome. Denominational groups sought to emphasize how their account of the Christian faith was differentiated from – and surpassed – others. If on the Protestant side there were instinctively contending varieties of the new fidelities their reforms pursued, for Catholics 'the position was complicated […] by the differences between England's old faith and Counter-Reformation Catholicism: often less a matter of practice than of polemicized self-consciousness.'[252] As we have seen throughout this chapter, the sympathetic remembrance of medieval religion was a continuing and everyday experience for people, across the denominational divide.[253] Yet this fondness for the past does not 'necessarily betoken sympathy for the new Catholicism warier of schism and heresy, and galvanised by a sense of mission.'[254]

As a playwright, Shakespeare seems (plausibly) less captivated by the more workaday, functional aspects of Counter-Reformation Catholicism, than with the residues of a spiritual yesterday he and many of his initial audiences remembered or knew (whether first- or second-hand): he earnestly employs the medieval customs and conventions originating from the liturgical calendar (and most biographies have a tentative section contemplating the youthful Shakespeare's visits to Coventry to take in its celebrated mystery-play cycles).

Helen Cooper and Beatrice Groves have documented the rich textures of the medieval drama to be located in Shakespeare's own plays,[255] and R. Chris Hassel has intriguingly

---

[250] Eamon Duffy, 'The godly and the multitude in Stuart England', *Seventeenth Century* 1:1 (1986), pp. 31-49.

[251] Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, pp. 230-1.

[252] Shell, *Religion*, p. 16.

[253] Jesse M. Lander, *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[254] Shell, *Religion*, p. 16.

[255] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Publishing, 2010); Beatrice Groves, Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare 1592-1604 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); cf. Anne Parkinson, 'Religious Drama in Kendal: the Corpus Christi Play in the Reign of James I', *Recusant History* 25:4 (2001), pp. 604-12. For Cooper's examination of the link between medieval romance and Shakespeare's late plays, see: Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

followed the ways the Renaissance drama intermingled with the Church's calendar.[256] It is also the link between court patronage and drama that explains much of the festive traditions abounding in them, even as the evolution in professional companies meant less connections to religious festivals.[257] Medieval religious drama took time to disappear, and determinedly endured into a time and genre for expediency labelled 'early modern' and 'secular'. Having said this, it is clear that once the performance of a play is no longer directly attached to a specific liturgical event, then certain breeds and manners of piety will be diluted.

The biblical drama of medieval England, by the time of Shakespeare's career, had been suppressed by Protestant administrators suspicious of its Catholic origin, and 'censorship appears to have hampered the depiction of religious material in the new public theatres as well.'[258] As Eamon Duffy has highlighted, taking into consideration the amalgamation of 'popular drama into the devotional and catechetical objectives of the late medieval Church, it was inevitable that the Elizabethan reform would attack [the Corpus Christi cycles] and other religious plays too.'[259] This was a daunting administrative task not without initial setbacks, especially given the civic pride and community exertion that went into creating these cycles; but implementation did occur, the plays doomed by fellowship with a 'discredited, or at least forbidden, aspect of the old ritual calendar.'[260]

Pamphleteers such as Phillip Stubbes in his 1583 *Anatomie of Abuses* cautioned that troupes permitted to sensationalize the word of God would inexorably infect the divine with their 'bawdy, wanton shows & uncomely gestures.'[261] By 1606, the *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players* forbade players from 'speak[ing] or us[ing] the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost or of the Trinity', upon pain of a £10 fine (approximately six months income for most actors). Plays written after 1606 avoided such terms as a consequence of the act, and new editions of older plays removed profane words. It was the only legislation hostile to players ratified during Shakespeare's working life, and the last until Parliament closed the theatres in 1642.

The catalyst for the *Act* seems to have been the performance of John Day's *The Isle of Gulls* in February at Blackfriars, with its mocking of the Union, and Parliamentarians seized on this to expurgate profanity entire. As James Shapiro has pointed out, the strictures went further than just precluding characters swear 'by God' or 'by my troth': '[A]ll those earthy common oaths – swearing by God's wounds ('swounds' or 'zounds') or his blood ('sblood') or his foot ('sfut' or 'fut'), familiar Christian exclamations that helped define such great roles as Mercutio, Hamlet, Richard III, Falstaff, Edmund and Iago, were now prohibited from being spoken on stage.'[262] Practically, companies had to scour their manuscripts and promptbooks for any occurrences of profanity and purge their material to prevent damaging financial

---

[256] R. Chris Hassel, *Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 1979).

[257] Meg Twycross, 'Some Approaches to Dramatic Festivity, Especially Processions', in Meg Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1996), pp. 1-33; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Metheun, 1986); Phebe Jensen, 'Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55:3 (2004), pp. 279-306.

[258] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 1.

[259] Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 579.

[260] *Ibid*., pp.579-80. See also: Paul Whitfield White, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', in John D. Cox & David Scott Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 135-152.

[261] Phillip Stubbes, *An Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) L5r – L6r.

[262] James Shapiro, *1606: William Shakespeare and The Year of Lear* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), p. 253.

penalties. As a result, the First Folio's text of 1623 represents an abridged, more benign and less expressive edition than the more irreverent early quartos.

Barbara Mowat has expressed reservations about the extent of the act's influence. She has highlighted the fact that the act only applied to dramatic performances, and thus changes to printed editions of dramatic works may have stemmed from other influences. These influences may have included changing cultural attitudes towards swearing, alterations made by particular scribes (such as Ralph Crane) and the desire to avoid offending particular individuals, such as Sir Henry Herbert (later the Master of Revels and therefore responsible for stage censorship from 1624 to 1642).[263] Whether or not such constraints had any direct consequence, contemporary playwrights exhibited but slender enthusiasm to replace the Church-plays with a biblical theatre of their own. Their interpretation of what constitutes a 'religious drama' was less literal-minded than more modern critics, however, and it need not instinctively equate with scriptural story-telling.[264] Additionally, as we shall see, a more liberal form of dialogue and enactment was not an insuperable hurdle to religious articulation: piety and popular entertainments were not cultural opposites.

Medieval Catholicism infuses Shakespeare's history plays set in the period, but they cannot linger confined: for instance, *Henry VI Part One* 'interrogates its own historicity',[265] confronting its own meta-theatrical representations of the past. Post-Reformation conditionality coalesces in the play with more chronologically local frames of reference. We can also see that when a play has a more exotic or pagan setting an indefinite moral disconnect is stationed between character and spectator, diminishing the clamorous Renaissance pressure to absorb ethical truths from paradigms – though undoubtedly most audience members would still compare and contrast their own private beliefs with those enacted on stage, the extent contingent on the interrogative temperament of the drama.

Shakespeare's plays can be regarded as successfully developing the linkage between non-religious drama and specifically contentious religious issues such as images and wondrous phenomena (perhaps most palpably seen in the 'awakening' of Leontes' 'faith' via Hermione's incarnate statue). Nonetheless, we cannot simply consider this as a Shakespearean pro-Catholic appraisal of the value of materiality or the miraculous in worship, especially following the obliteration of sculpture in the generations before. The new Catholicism after Trent acknowledged both the universal reality and common usefulness of miracles but they did not unassumingly permit a proliferation of Church-endowed inexplicable happenings.[266] Protestants too had a more complex attitude to such matters than either contemporary or latter-day stereotypes portray: if miracles *per se* were stigmatized as 'popish', mysterious goings-on (or the desire for them) could still be sanctioned within a substitute clarifying structure of more generalized divine guidance and control.[267] Nonetheless, Alexandra Walsham's vital work on the Counter-Reformation has noted the way in which priests launched in England after 1574 nurtured and then exploited the culture of the miraculous in their 'efforts to reform and evangelize the populace and to defend doctrines

---

[263] Barbara Mowat, 'Q2 *Othello* and the 1606 "Acte to restraine the Abuses of Players"', in Christa Jansohn & Bodo Plachta, eds, *Varianten-Variants-Varientes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 91-106.

[264] Knapp, *Tribe*, pp. 2ff.

[265] Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 23.

[266] Alison Shell, 'St. Winifred's Well and its Meaning in Post-Reformation British Catholic Culture', in Peter Davidson & Jill Bepler, eds, *The Triumphs of the Defeated: Early Modern Festivals and Messages of Legitimacy* (Wolfenbuettel: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), pp. 271-80.

[267] Darren Oldridge, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 23-5.

and practices assaulted by Protestant polemicists.'[268] Receptivity to traditional and/ or extraordinary beliefs emboldened manipulative conduct and the promoting of procedures relating to saints, relics, and sacramental; so for Catholics (as for Protestants) the employment of supernatural force remained a strained issue, fracturing and destabilizing this minority Church in England.

Dramaturgical imitating or caricaturing of the supernatural thus reverberated across denominational partitions: creative narratives representing pagan antiquities, real Catholic pasts or hybrid presents, proceed as a location for discussion muddying the superficial distinction between the falsity/ artificiality of the theatre, and the supposed 'truth' explicated by religion. Questions of theatrical exploitation and augmentation problematize this area: who is exploiting whom, which is being augmented? Many critics have perceived a more forthright reallocation of the spiritual capacity inherent to religion into the theatre – Greenblatt's 'emptying out' – but this underplays the character of contemporaneous society: the theatrical sermons and acts of worship we have encountered culturally coalesce with the numinous deliberations of the playhouse.

Anti-theatricalism thrived as the playhouses multiplied, the theatre denounced from the pulpit as an abomination and distraction. When lacking religious allusion, it was at the very least uncommunicative of God's word; when it exercised religious insinuation in a fashion combined with irreverent or sacrilegious discourse, it was to be strongly condemned. The imaginative qualities of drama might have been condemned as representing falsity but Christian worship required imagination in its practice – the mental and spiritual conception of the divine, notwithstanding its absence to sensory perception, was not envisaged as indicating a spuriousness to God's presence in people's lives. A resolute meditation or supplication is more systematized and restrained than executing an extemporized prayer or listening to a sermon (or, indeed, attending a play), but all require imagination, even if the process of their undertaking is distinct. The faithfulness of Christian practice entailed imaginative stimulation so that spiritual awareness and advancement might transpire; the bluff and thunder of anti-theatrical specialists should not screen us from their principal aim of nurturing and promoting Christian piety.

On the stage itself, Puritans could be frequently stereotyped for their limpidness and suppressive instincts; yet some ridicule of Puritans in the theatre claimed that Puritan's personal reading of scripture led them to anarchic, licentious excesses, rather than gloomy bowdlerisations: Falstaff began named for the Lollard and proto-Protestant martyr Sir John Oldcastle.[269] It was frequently the hypocrisy in both Puritanism and Anti-Puritanism that appealed to playwrights: In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is memorably reproached for being aloofly 'virtuous' and anti-social to baked goods and hopeless beer; yet, his raucous and occasionally boorish accuser – Sir Toby Belch – reminds the onlookers that anti-social conduct occurs in a variety of configurations, and mocked and mockers alike are lampooned as the play progresses.[270]

---

[268] Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal* 46:4 (December 2003), p. 779.

[269] P. Corbin & D. Sedge, eds, *The Oldcastle Controversy: Sir John Oldcastle, Part I and the Famous Victories of Henry V* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).
[270] Phebe Jensen, 'Falstaff in Illyria: The second Henriad and *Twelfth Night'*, in *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 149-93.

The relationship between anti-theatricalism and the perception of a playhouse enmity to Puritans is therefore more complex than a reductive originating of anti-theatrical discourse from Puritans will allow. Middleton claimed himself a Puritan, but evidently saw no contradiction between his profuse, fruitful career and his religious beliefs.[271] Scholarly attempts to present a Catholic theatricality in liturgy, and Protestant denunciation of ceremony, with the latter illuminating criticisms of the theatre, fail since many Protestants (especially Lutherans) 'retained a good deal of religious ceremonial, and […] it erodes the distinction between what happened inside and outside the church.'[272]

Reformed religion could be very receptive to religious drama – during his Marian exile in Basel John Foxe put Christ on the stage in his *Christus Triumphans* in 1556, believing that drama was suitable if it arose from scripture (the reverse of what was to prevail during Shakespeare's career). In Foxe's *Christus*, we trail the destiny of an illustrative soul pressured by Satan and the Antichrist (i.e., the Catholic Church), until Christ finally saves him. The play has a basic tragicomic plot, progressing via failures of recognition and other misperceptions on the journey to a happy ending. It is noticeable that Foxe takes on a modified version of a typically Terentian - i.e., Roman 'New Comedy' – plot[273] for Protestantism, unfettered by the 'immoral' components of classical paradigms, as the upheavals and ensuing restructuring conclusion of Roman comedy are reworked as apocalyptic history. John Hazel Smith has observed that the dénouement of *Christus*, 'a preparation for a wedding, is a clear use of a long theological tradition inherited from the apocalyptic source and from some Roman comic practice.'[274] Clearly works like *Pericles*, but also Shakespeare's play (with John Fletcher) that takes the English Reformation as its subject matter – *Henry VIII* – make use of similarly loosely connected episodes as their structure.[275] For many Protestant audiences, this framework was entirely reasonable, because they would perceive a 'reformed' play making use of classical sources for its plot structure. The incongruent occurrences of *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* form a coherent succession which is then presented for subversion: a providential conclusion transpires from seemingly doubtful conditions. In *Henry VIII*, the character of the Henrician Reformation is 'thus irredeemably double: it is an event which precipitates godly change, yet it is at the same time an event precipitated by ungodly behaviour.'[276]

In England particularly there was a noticeable alteration between generations of reformers (in some measure caused by the anomalous origins of English Reformation and the successive frequently fluctuating rulers). Central to early 17th Century Puritanism was to belief that the reformed English Church had not progressed sufficiently; its structures preserved too many elements of the old faith, while its clerics inadequately foisted appropriate Christian standards. Nonetheless, as we have seen, an especially more moderate Puritanism remained active in the nation's religious and political life, and did not segregate itself from the broader

---

[271] Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[272] Shell, *Religion*, p. 34.

[273] A key Terentian scenario entangled surreptitious marriage, a catastrophe (in the technical and positive sense of a reorganizing ending), normally proclaimed by a returning character who holds concealed knowledge. See: Evangelos Karakasis, *Terence and the Language of Roman Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[274] John Hazel Smith, *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist: Titus et Gesippus; Christus Triumphans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 39.

[275] Gordon McMullan, ed., 'All is true: Hidden reformations', in *Henry VIII* (London: A & C Black, 2000), p. 137-43.

[276] *Ibid*., p. 143.

public.[277] Given that the official Church of the later part of Shakespeare's life was for all intents and purposes Calvinist, many points of theology would have been shared by Puritans, even if the less palatable elements of Calvinism (such as an ardent pre-destinationism) were being more widely rejected.[278]

For many, religious contemplation was a more than sufficient source of pleasure, enjoyment and inspiration: meditation had a medieval antecedence and traversed contemporary denominational precincts. The Protestant Edmund Bunny adapted the English Jesuit Robert Persons's *A Booke of Christian Exercise* to animate and inspire readers in the direction of a profounder comprehension into the mysteries of Christianity and as a means to exhibit their commitment.[279] Religious dedication makes arduous imaginative exigencies and was a severer undertaking than any demanded by drama – and as such could commonly be measured as the more enthralling, dynamic alternative rather than a harsher option to be shirked. Religious extremists, malcontents or recluses were clearly not the only ones to shun the playwrights' creations. In reality, post-Reformation England compelled spiritual sustenance and religious interaction at every turn, and the populace expressed a colossal enthusiasm for religious material and occupation, leading one to perhaps enquire how the theatre was able to attract enough customers to survive, let alone thrive. The multiplicity of preferences explains the possibility of growth for the theatre, but for many citizens even if they had no ethical reservations against playhouses, they simply favoured spending what little time they had free in an endeavour that was religious in nature – the repertory didn't generally provide for this and so church would have been a more obvious and satisfactory choice (and need not imply either a religious fanaticism or an aesthetic/ intellectual unsophistication). The intensity of vigorously participating in the Christian faith also had the accompanying consequence of rendering plays for some as frivolous and inconsequential, even when they were not being debauched or self-indulgent.

Yet this does not result in the cheerless, bleak religiosity so familiar from caricature or exaggeration. However anxious (of salvation) and cautious (of wit or decoration) Puritan groups could be, they comprised a penetratingly aestheticized attitude to Christianity, contending and justifying the position and status of everything within the faith to the extent that departure from this aesthetic could not be tolerated, and it often emerges as dogmatically pedantic to later perceptions and sensibilities.

Restraint and abstemiousness in all religious groups can cultivate contentment and gratification, delight desiring in and originating from the contemplation of the divine or through inhabiting an existence admissible to God. Those opposed to the theatre were like other, more lenient, Christians for whom too religious beliefs and practices absorbed their lives more than simply as convention or trepidation. But for anti-theatricalists, the identification of the playhouse as a subjective impediment to God meant it could never be a cradle of satisfaction or attention, especially in the way religious steadfastness could.

---

[277] Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[278] Charles Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-21; David Como, 'Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Early Seventeenth-Century England', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier, eds, *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000).

[279] See: Shell, *Religion*, p. 73. Cf. Victor Houliston, 'Why Robert Persons Would Not Be Pacified: Edmund Bunny's Theft of *The Book of Resolution*', in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas McCoog (Rome: Institutuum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 2007), pp. 209-32.

When we meet religion directly in the everyday theatre of the late Elizabethan/ early Jacobean period it is not regarded as a jubilant subject or activity, but often one for banality: occurring in a time and place where religion was so contentious and central, it is to be expected that this withdrawal to relative triteness arises from apprehension about religious material being explicitly presented. If this prefigures the privatization of religious adherence inside a posterior secular society, it does not signify that the theatre of Shakespeare's day served as a substitute for either personal or spiritual elevation.

Competition for attention and attendance undoubtedly existed between church and theatre, and the affinity between them – as communal, affected procedures – was bound to amplify enmity and antagonism. The image of a vehement preacher denouncing the theatre from the pulpit has tended to be latterly construed as some confession of spiritual downfall or defeat, but this need not indicate beleaguered individuals overseeing disappearing congregations – the reduction in church attendances would only come much later – but rather the expectation that preachers would occupy and render the prevailing moral standpoint, adhering to and upholding universally recognized principles of ethics and respectability. Far from being lone voices in a hurricane of theatre-mad freethinkers, they held a 'broad cultural authority',[280] were respected, and could certainly maintain their rationale more convincingly than other clerics might sustain the ethical efficacy of play.

We have tended to hear only the loudest voices from the past, decrying the moral vacuum of the theatre. Yet playwrights did defend the honourable usefulness of their work, and as mediums for supporting the true cause of religion. They seldom sermonized, but playwrights had many reasons to disintegrate the frontier segregating play and sermon: to further their own reputation and increase the size and eminence of the theatre's patrons, as well as a genuine belief in the principled spiritual capacity of their exertions as a form of ecumenical ministry alongside the church's.

---

[280] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation and Theatre in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 10.

CHAPTER FOUR

Religious Inheritance in *Pericles*

In a period when novelty had a prominent cultural value (especially in the theatre, where original plays were a necessity for income and reputation), the choric preamble to *Pericles* is particularly arresting. Embodying the Middle English poet John Gower, the Chorus's language is knowingly old-fashioned – medieval*ism* rather than simply medieval – a technique that will have numerous implications for the drama's engagement with history, religion, and aesthetic representation. The metre employed substantiates its archaic traits, its retroactively wistful timbre, by converting iambic pentameters into the octosyllabic couplets that structure the historical Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (one of the sources of *Pericles*, Book VIII of which is itself a version of the Hellenistic novella *Apollonius of Tyre*). The play announces itself by means of a long-deceased, potentially obsolete, poet come from the ashes and partaking in a consciously historic, oral dissemination of stories that accentuate singing. With eight appearances, including a framing prologue and epilogue, Gower has more conspicuous and consequential choric voice than almost any other in dramas either by Shakespeare or his contemporaries; it indicates the significance of narration – telling not showing, and foregrounding the narrator inventor instead of agents or actors. Gower's presence in *Pericles* moves much-debated authorship discussions away from attribution and towards intertextuality and the interconnectedness of all texts, '[striving] against obsolescence and its pernicious effects'.[281]

In a powerful essay, Andrew James Johnston discloses how in *Pericles* Shakespeare intricately connects the tensions of the Reformation and the 'Old Religion' to English literary history, especially Gower and Chaucer, 'by weaving a complex network of allusions revolving around the problem of incest, an issue elevated to the level of a powerful metaphor of history itself, Shakespeare invites his audience to investigate what it means to self-consciously confront tradition'; the playwright is able to make use of the age's religious quarrels in drama to interrogate 'established historiographical ideologies and the cultural binaries they entail'.[282] *Pericles* simultaneously criticises both the notion that the present is inevitably an improvement on what has gone before, that literature and history move in a teleological progression, and the incongruous concept of the present's ancestral dependence on the past: concealed and ironic connections between authors, texts and events interrupt and destabilise comfortable, straightforward accounts of Reformation historiography.[283]

Through its formal structures and intellectual patterns, as well as its linguistic and symbolic details, *Pericles* plays a textual game and, through the genre of tragicomedy, dramatizes the period's tensions and confrontational self-examinations of the past and present with a multi-layered meditation on both history and literary history. A complex interplay of ironies by turns honouring and parodying its literary antecedents, *Pericles* strives to examine the past – and present-day versions of that past – beyond a naïve, generalised nostalgia that yearned for a departed world. Erasmus's letter to More about *Praise of Folly* suggests itself, where the self-conscious and serious satire is defended but chastisement is

---

[281] Lucy Munro, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590-1674* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 71.
[282] Andrew James Johnston, 'Sailing the Seas of Literary History: Gower, Chaucer, and the Problem of Incest in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', in *Poetica* 41, No. 3/4 (2009), pp. 381-407; 382.
[283] *Ibid*., pp. 404-5.

also given to potential critics for reading the game *too* earnestly – the contradiction integral to the *serio-ludic*, the method of serious play.[284] In *Pericles*, the playful anachronisms and dialectics it evokes need to be taken seriously, for they have repercussions.

The convoluted and sophisticated layers to *Pericles* carry it to the territory of the hyper-literary, calling attention to itself *as literature*, and hesitant in its desire for us to see through the artifice towards a 'meaning' within: as a literary game, it sometimes refuses to play. A noticeable, perhaps the essential, quality of *Pericles* is that it is allo- or poly-tropic, capable of existing in at least two distinct modes simultaneously. Such as aptitude likewise characterises its approach to genre and history, as well as the temporal-historical religion of Christianity, and as we will see, *Pericles* uses one theological doctrine not only against another but also apparently against itself, interrogating and dissecting diverse religious thoughts and practice, particularly with regard to the use and interpretation of signs and images within faith. In *Pericles*, the boundaries between these ideologies, reality and fancy, the lawful and unlawful, indeed the past and present, dissipate in particular via 'incest ... installed as a central metaphor for history.'[285]

<div align="center">*</div>

Certainty and continuity in *Pericles* are challenging to locate. A medieval poet introduces a classical novel plot to an early modern play, complicating historical, generic and aesthetic meanings. The play launches faraway amid erotic, social and domestic anarchy, with unspoken theo-political consequences. The opening scene at Antiochus's rotten court suggests disorder necessitating order. The tyrant's contention to the hero that 'you have at large received | The danger of the task you undertake' (I.i.1-2) is swiftly assented by Pericles, but the exotic, alien setting is pungent with menace and we know he has not yet learned fully the enormity of the trial(s) he is to embark on, either here or in the 'patterne of painefull adventures', the 'variable historie of the accidents' or the 'uncertaintie of this world and the fickle state of mans life' to come.[286] These patterns will admit more reflective connotations than a straightforward record of changeability or the whim and fancy of fortune. *Pericles* interrogates the intricate implications of fate and chance, investigating their doctrinal ambivalences and theological variations, just as it questions forms of impression and representation: the play begins with Pericles seduced by the superficial appearance of Antiochus's daughter. Pericles' journey is to be not so much a navigation of the Mediterranean seas and shores, but the steering of his course away from false signs. Shakespeare will engage with the Reformation's polemical binary of verbal/ visual image, asserting the nuanced equilibrium between the two, a balance which is both drama's distinctive capacity (being a composite of the oral/ verbal and staged/ gestural) and a continuation of the abundance of rich verbal imagery in biblical/ religious language.

The function of the poet, as Northrop Frye said, is 'to remember'[287] and Gower's accomplishment of reminiscence gives the narrative its value, operating across the rhythms

---

[284] Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958; revised edition: New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1969), pp. 221-36.

[285] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 392.

[286] Phrases from the title page of Laurence Twine's novel *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*, a translation by Twine of the tale of Apollonius of Tyre from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c.1386-90). It was recorded on the Stationer's Register in 1576, and is now extant in two editions, one not dated but published c.1594, and another reprinted in 1607.

[287] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; Princeton University Press, new edition, 1971), p. 56.

and rituals of season and ceremony (Prologue, ll. 5-6), partaking as a shared memory; one cannot deny the past's significance, even if 'wit's more ripe' in these 'later times' (ll. 11-12), and to dismiss the old-fashioned style and presentation of the story is a misguided refutation of time's message and application. Indeed, there is a playful tone to Gower's opening speech so that we are immediately wrong-footed by his presence: '*Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius*'[288] (l. 10) prompt the poet (and the playwright), an everyday and well-known axiom,[289] but one that bears repeating and re-hearing – or does it? Is the very venerability of the Latin a mocking of supposed esteem of the aphorism's contention, so that older does *not* mean better? The past is evoked, and it can and should be remembered, yet the ironic tenor warns against a clichéd, overly romanticized concept of a hierarchical and communal medieval society, 'where songs were sung at festivals and ember-eves, i.e. on special occasions dictated by the religious calendar.'[290]

As Johnston points out, citing the *Aeneid's* 'Arma virumque cano', *Pericles's* Chorus is even more ambivalent, less medieval, than we might suppose, conjuring up the classical genre of epic poetry from its very first line. It would also perhaps be possible to see this opening line – 'To sing a song that old was sung' – as evoking the beginning to Homer's *Odyssey*: 'Goddess of song, teach me the story of a hero'.[291] This anticipates not only Pericles's own peregrinations to come, but also with hindsight disturbs the sentimentalized medieval atmosphere of singing of festivals which Gower then narrates: before we step back to this time, we have – briefly – reached even further back to the Hellenic world: 'thus the idea of the "song that old was sung" becomes medieval only in retrospect, i.e. after the Chorus has introduced himself as the medieval poet Gower and plunged into his series of medievalising clichés.'[292] The Hellenic-classical evocation in the first line was perhaps to have been expected: *Pericles*'s title evokes the great hero and statesman of Athenian culture during its Golden Age. Moreover, the play's main source, Gower's *Confessio*, was a version of the Hellenistic novella *Apollonius of Tyre*. Yet this classical link is itself destabilized since the edition of the novella known to the 14th Century Gower was an abridged Latin translation; the original Greek had long since vanished: 'it is as a specifically *medieval* rather than straightforwardly classical text that Shakespeare treats his source in Pericles.'[293]

Gower's presence and his hackneyed imagery allow us to encounter an anachronistic, modern, vision of the medieval world – 'a cultural both ritualistic and static with an every-day life deeply rooted in the metaphysical as provided and controlled by a powerful religious institution: the Universal Church.'[294] Enacted to us, this realm is presented as 'more primitive, secure and whole than the dynamic and crisis-ridden present, an age governed by a temporality essentially static, a period without conflict, rupture or tension'.[295] Yet Gower's medievalising *performance* is undermined as it is delivered so that the wistful world evoked is also more complex and multifarious than we might believe in our 'later times / When wit's more ripe (ll. 11-12). From the outset this ambivalent series of evocations and connections

---

[288] 'And the older a good thing is, the better.'
[289] The relaxed, pleasure-loving Freevil in John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (c.1604/5) – a contemporaneous play with many links to *Pericles* – speaks a version of this maxim, '*bonum, quo communius, eo melius*', 'the more shared a thing is, the better.'
[290] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 387.
[291] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trams. Walter Shrewing (1980; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 1.
[292] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 387.
[293] *Ibid.*, p. 392; italics Johnston's.
[294] *Ibid.*, p. 388.
[295] *Ibid.*, p. 388.

alerts us to the play's sophisticated nexus of historical and cultural attitudes and influences to come.

In Gower's ardently outdated language he is both distanced and attached to the characters he creates – they speak with an immediate reality by comparison[296] – and by transcending the past through appearing in the present, and by calling to mind a story which draws back even further into history, Gower stages a variety of dimensions in time, testified by and communicated to any number of audiences in a range of boundless places. The narrative proper itself contains its own chronicled clock, with characters moving through the years in the chronology of an enacted past, present and future. Yet, if Gower's choruses collapse divisions in time, they are used in part to make clear the action, plug holes in plot time or supply ethical observations. However, they are predominantly employed to recurrently impress the *procedure* of narrative itself, which is indeed not restricted to the poet's appearances, but infuses the whole play. Narrators and narrative texts are significant and pervasive features within the play's action, generating the irresistible feeling of the weight of narrative and the importance of communicating through them. This meticulous groundwork, attuning the audience to narrative practice and method, is a conscientious preparation for their heightened function in the effect and implications of the play's resolution (or lack thereof). As Barbara Mowat has argued, in *Pericles*, 'cause-and effect patterns are broken, generic conventions abandoned … and the dramatic illusion repeatedly broken through narrative intrusion, spectacle, and other sudden disturbances of the aesthetic distance.'[297]

The opening speech by Gower (lines 1-42) slides into scene setting. We find ourselves in Antioch: 'I'll tell you what mine authors say' (l. 20) pronounces Gower, forswearing his own creation and withdrawing his accountability for the scandalous information he is about to divulge (ll. 21-42). That the play refocuses from its diffusion of authorial identity in the singing of Gower on to this parable of aberrant generation within incest additionally problematizes its own representations of creation. Paternity is a conventional metaphor for creative acts, particularly literary ones and especially the concept of Chaucer of the 'Father of English Poetry',[298] and this sanctions us to see the themes of identity and creation coalesce. The play is generated out of the incestuous liaison with which it starts: Pericles and his character crystallize and then develop beneath the burden of the perverse nuptial scheme arranged by the incestuous monarch. Pericles's excursions which organize the remainder of the drama are stimulated by this traumatic primary meeting, and if fleshly propagation is a concealed metaphor for collaborative authorship, then the image of sexuality in Antioch is exceptionally disconcerting.

Pericles is confronted by a riddle that is remarkable for its uncomplicatedness – it has a mere semblance of crypticity – daring the suitors to name what cannot be named. Pericles's reaction is to abscond, afraid of the truth of incest, around the Mediterranean. Accordingly, although incest is enunciated in the first part of the play (usually accredited to Wilkins), it institutes the whole play's theme. We originate with a king and his daughter; we terminate with Pericles and Marina. Instead of being fragmented or intermittent or incoherent, the play

---

[296] The plays-within-the-play in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet* all differentiate themselves from their immediate context by making use of older linguistic forms and structures.

[297] Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (1976; University of Georgia Press, new edition, 2011), p. 99.

[298] Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 14-7.

contains and revolves on this subject; it is rigorously structured around Pericles's haunting of Antiochus in himself.[299] Antioch is thus a cognitive-emotional and interior topography for Pericles, instead of a state of affairs he has disembarked upon. He is causally connected to what he cannot confess, instead of being coincidentally linked to it (causation and coincidence being two principal means of apprehending the affiliation between one occurrence to another in this play). Succeeding events are feasibly motivated by, rather than simply happening to, Pericles and his family: his competitive acquisition of Thaisa; her specious demise; the abduction of Marina, and so on. The intervallic and peregrinate arrangement of the play perhaps leads us into supposing that a calamitous Pericles merely collides into these events; a more interior interpretation would recognize them as proceedings he carries with him. The voyaging in the play is psychological rather than actual, and the particular development of these incidents substitute Pericles's somewhat absent and indecipherable character.

The reunification with Marina is often observed as the play's lyrical climax – for T.S. Eliot it was one of Shakespeare's great recognition scenes, and kindled a poem.[300] The reunion itself transpires because Lysimachus, governor of Mytilene, and erstwhile bordello patron, has been so mesmerized by Marina's steadfast chastity that he has left 'as cold as a snowball, saying his prayers too.'[301] Lysimachus learns of a desolate, inconsolable man and prescribes the remedy of Marina, illustrating her in gracelessly sensual and carnal tones, with allusions to attraction and allure, disconcertingly reiterating Lysimachus's own previous deeds in the brothel. Unbeknown to Lysimachus, the play is at this juncture sending Pericles back to the prospect of his initial distress, to the paternal-filia interbreeding from which he has been escaping, but which has happened to be within him not without. Marina's hurried marriage to Lysimachus is but one of the techniques the play uses as it frantically attempts to withstand this unavoidable meeting between father and daughter (Lysimachus's unbecomingness as a husband underscoring the lingering hazard of incest beyond the play's end). *Pericles* is relentlessly undertaking to begin again, to redraft, to progress, to rephrase, to have its final three acts expurgated from its first two (to shake off the opportunist George Wilkins?),[302] to evade what was inaugurated at the outset.[303] Yet this play is not so straightforwardly divisible, nor so easily sequestered against endangerment.

In Gower's epilogue, we discover that Antiochus and his daughter are pugnaciously expended by a bolt of lightning,[304] but the reunion between Pericles and Marina

---

[299] Cf. Ruth Nevo, 'The Perils of Pericles', in *Shakespeare's Other Language* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 33-61.
[300] 'Marina' from the collection 'Ariel Poems', in T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems: 1909-1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), pp. 115-6.
[301] Bolt, the brothel-keeper, at IV.v.144-5.
[302] Wilkins was an inn-keeper in Cow-Cross, a London district 'notorious as a haunt of whores and thieves'. Most historical evidence about him originates from his habitual presence in criminal court archives for robbery and violent conduct. Countless indictments against him concerned aggression against women, including striking an expectant mother in the abdomen, and hitting another woman. The latter materializes in additional registers as a known 'bawd', or keeper of prostitutes, leading to the suggestion that his establishment operated as a brothel and that Wilkins was a procurer. Cf. R. Warren, G. Taylor & M.P. Jackson, *A reconstructed text of Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 6-7; Charles Nicholl, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), pp. 200-4; 220-1.
[303] A production in the open-air theatre of Regent's Park, London, in July 2011 did indeed cut the first two acts of the drama and 'Re-imagined [the play] for everyone ages six and over'. See: http://openairtheatre.com/production/pericles-reimagined. Sourced: 18th February, 2017.
[304] Gwilym Jones, Ch.8 '*Pericles*', in *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 175-193.

communicates unnervingly in their incestuous diction (just as it is conceivable that the same performer would have enacted both roles of Antiochus's daughter and Marina). 'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget', exclaims Pericles (V.i.185) as he and Marina acknowledge each other, but correspondingly evoking involuntarily the incestuous connection that neither he nor the drama can fully elude. Gower's epilogue unites the two families, at the same time as he seeks to extricate them, launching into iambic pentameter and drawing alongside the play's own time.

> In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard
> Of monstrous lust the due and just reward;
> In Pericles, his queen and daughter seen,
> Although assailed with Fortune fierce and keen,
>   Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast,
>   Led on by heaven and crowned with joy at last.

(Epilogue, ll. 1-6)

Pericles's epilogue endeavours to re-establish the motif of legitimate set against illegitimate love that structured its source – Book VIII of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* – possibly advocating the drama as a variety of morality tale, but also problematizing its potential as a restoration of medieval religious drama's practices.[305]

We saw earlier how the Hellenic associations of *Pericles's* sources are not as authentic as we might suppose, and are in fact medieval appropriations of a classical text (a medievalism itself a deliberate early modern stereotyping of the Middle Ages). Nonetheless, the classical evocation remains, and has further topographic associations that suggest the sphere of the early Christian Church: the play's locations – especially Antioch, Ephesus and Tarsus – are associated with the apostles.[306] Amalgamating several religiously inflected readings, Maurice Hunt 'reads the New Testament's Acts, itself a "romance narrative", as an "inter-text" for the play, with the fishermen as early Christians, Pericles' armour figuring "the salvatory symbolic armour that Paul describes in Ephesians 6:11-17", and Pericles himself as sufficiently "both the donor and recipient of proto-Christian virtues that his divine election for a secularly redemptive dream vision seems appropriate."'[307] Accordingly, it is possible to sense that the ambiance of *Pericles* is 'heavy with futurity, specifically with the arrival of a messiah who will convert its decadent cities into the landscape of redemption.'[308] The play is, however, more involved than such readings allow. *Pericles* does, indeed, offer a collapsing of linear time, so that the past and future are made (often troublingly) present, a temporal collapse that communicates the drama's aesthetic engagement with the early modern period's religious tensions, which might be regarded as ruptures in the time-fabric of history.

---

[305] Kathryn Hunter's 2005 production of *Pericles* at the Globe, London, had Corin Redgrave enact old Pericles as an on-stage chorus observing his younger self – played by Robert Lučkay – experiencing his escapades.

[306] Cf. Constance C. Relihan, 'Liminal Geography: *Pericles* and the Politics of Place', in *New Casebooks: Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. Alison Thorne (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 71-90. Orig. pub. in *Philological Quarterly* 71 (1992), pp. 281-301.

[307] Maurice Hunt, 'Shakespeare's *Pericles* and the Acts of the Apostles', *Christianity and Literature* 49 (2000), pp. 296-305.

[308] Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 147.

Andrew James Johnston notes how 'Christianity and the ancient novel novel develop side-by-side in the Eastern Mediterranean … a culturally hybrid and syncretistic world'[309] and how scholars such as Karl Kerényi and Reinhold Merkelbach have linked ancient novels to contemporary mystery cults, with their shared obsession on death and resurrection, connecting them again to the Christian narrative. Johnston draws attention to the potential flaws in such a specific correlation, but though notes the way generally such an approach highlights the various cultural and textual points of contact.[310] If we look to more contemporary religious debates, then more apparent, if still constrained, argues Johnston, are the features the play shares with the medieval drama. He cites Peter Womack's inspired contention that plays like *Pericles* are expressive of early modern literary discussions over employing some of the practices of prior religious drama, with their pictorial and spectacle qualities, against the severer neo-Aristotelean aesthetics which – via Sidney – Womack links to Protestant bids to exorcize Catholic-type rudiments from contemporary drama.[311]

Johnston is appropriately circumspect in accrediting any oversimplifying or reductive dichotomy of Catholic image versus Protestant word that diminishes the 'intricate nature of the historical and cultural layers that Shakespeare piles one upon the other in *Pericles*.'[312] He rightly argues that we cannot only see *Pericles* as 'an updated version of a miracle play' and that the elaborate associations the Shakespeare text makes to the earlier literature of Gower and Chaucer, operating via the imperative metaphors of incest and riddles, propound a desire to locate the play 'in a pointedly *English* literary history'; on top of the play's overlaid amalgam of numerous other antiquities, this has extensive repercussions for Shakespearean concepts of history and the need to resist unwarranted periodization and the deceptive lucidity of teleological advancement.[313] As we will see, there are challenging connotations in this not only for the ideological underpinnings of the Reformation's account of the procedures concerning theology and history, but also for the Counter-Reformation's, once we start to visualize the past not as a straightforward succession of events (especially when contending later ones supersede earlier ones), but as an array of 'co-present, mutually interpenetrating and overlapping temporal spaces.'[314]

*

The music of the spheres in the reunification scene and Pericles's hallucinatory apparition of Diana, insinuate that a celestial sanction befalls the play; Pericles's sorrow and peregrination come close to representing the human excursion in the direction of grace. We have seen how explicitly religious interpretations of the play from G. Wilson Knight to Sarah Beckwith have an attraction, whether as spiritual myth or (for Beckwith) syntactical exposition of divine clemency. More mystical readings of the play may perhaps also resonate with one noticeable ideological mounting in its early performance history that elucidates the play's attraction within the period's religious ruptures and concealments. *Pericles* was presented with possible polemical intentions by an assemblage of recusant Catholic actors – the Cholmley Players, also known as the Simpsons of Egton Bridge – in the North Riding of Yorkshire during the

---

[309] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 389.

[310] *Ibid.*, p. 390n, footnote 24.

[311] Peter Womack, 'Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999), pp. 169-188.

[312] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 391.

[313] *Ibid.*, p. 392; 393 (italics Johnston's); 406.

[314] *Ibid.*, p. 406.

Christmas season of 1609-10.[315] Their repertory included not just *Pericles*, but *King Lear*, a 'St. Christopher Play', and the extremely topical *The Travails of the Three English Brothers* by John Day, William Rowley and no less than George Wilkins.[316] That the latter encompassed a section where the Pope is addressed as 'The stair of men's salvations and the key / That binds or looseth our transgressions' would undoubtedly have gratified its performers.[317] In *Pericles*, the hero's salutation to his daughter cited above – 'thou that beget'st him that did thee beget' – approximates Marian theology; moreover, perhaps the Marian reverberations of Thaisa's resurrection sequence, corresponding to the revitalization of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, were measure of its attraction in this context. Catholic subtexts in the play, especially the amalgamation of harmony and aroma at Thaisa's rediscovery, and their echoes of Marian iconography, are significant – as we shall see.

Our knowledge of the Cholmley Players occasion in 1609-10 derives principally from the consequent indictment in the Court of Star Chamber, effected against the Catholic Sir John Yorke by his neighbour Sir Stephen Proctor, a Puritan; Yorke was accused with presenting a St. Christopher play at his manor house Gowthwaite Hall. The boy player Thomas Pant testified that the text had been brought from London, with 'additions' comprising a contention between a Popish priest and an Anglican minister (finishing with angels administering the priest; devils attending the minister).[318] The testimony of Pant and others is hardly reliable;[319] however, an inaudible, slender modification to *Pericles* to promote a Catholic interpretation is not unlikely: 'a protective angel standing behind Marina during her interview with Lysimachus in the brothel is all that would be necessary to create a providential view of the contest and to point Marina's similarity to female saints and martyrs.'[320]

Amongst recent approaches to *Pericles*, Howard Felperin has argued for Catholic dramatic sources and correlatives in the legend of St. Agnes and the Digby MS *Mary Magdalene*.[321] Felperin is more guarded about the exact nature of the play's theology, seeing it as if not precisely a 'Catholic' drama, it is nonetheless *catholic* in the broader sense of its dependence upon the techniques of older dramatic conventions and its suggestion of a system of belief that generates universality. Comparing aspects of *Pericles* to medieval saints' plays, Felperin argues for the apparently inevitable nature of one's fate, just exhibiting a remarkable similarity to Reformed notions of predestination or the martyred figures in John Foxes's *Actes and Monuments*. Even if one does not want to assert a Shakespearean employment of *exclusively* Catholic traditions, there is a clear use of a analogous standpoint in his commentary on more recent theologies, and an incessant responsiveness to the intersection between past and present, not least because, as Alexandra Walsham has

[315] Suzanne Gossett, ed., *Pericles* (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), pp. 86-8.

[316] John Murphy, *Darkness and Devils: Exorcism and King Lear* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1984).

[317] Anthony Parr, ed., *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 88.

[318] Gossett, *Pericles*, pp. 87-8.

[319] See: J. Wasson & B. D. Palmer, eds, *Records of Early English Drama – West Riding, Yorkshire and Derbyshire* (Durham: Durham University Press, 2005). See also: G.W. Boddy, 'Players of interludes in North Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications Journal* 3 (1976), pp. 95-130.

[320] Gossett, *Pericles*, p. 88.

[321] The text of *Mary Magdalene* is one of five plays (one a fragment) bound together in Oxford's Bodleian Library *MS Digby 133*, having been bequeathed to it by Sir Kenelm Digby in 1634. Though critics sometimes write of a 'Digby playwright' (particularly when examining the *Mary Magdalene* alongside *The Conversion of Saint Paul*, the other surviving English Saint play derived from the New Testament), the pieces are in fact independent. Cf. Howard Felperin, 'This Great Miracle: *Pericles*', in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 114-32.

persuasively argued, the issue of God's intervention in mankind's affairs was not only a recent subject for the more fanatical Protestants.[322]

Different strands of theology, and divergences within constituent parts of each, each had variations and (occasional) inconsistencies as they sought to explain human sin and judgment within the context of the mysteries of creation and divine grace. One can suppose, therefore, dramatists to be even less internally coherent, particularly if they themselves wanted to take advantage of theological discrepancies and ambiguities for dramatic effect. In the last scene of *Hamlet*, the prince recalls the words of Matthew 10 as he prepares himself for the duel: 'There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow' (V.ii.197-8).[323] This also echoes Calvin's language: '[God provides] a special Providence sustaining, cherishing, superintending, all the things which he has made, even to a sparrow'[324] (Calvin leaves out the gospel writer's point that people are more significant than sparrows, perhaps to lessen humanity's sway and intensify divine authority). Yet, if Hamlet the prince offers a Calvinist argument for the direct intervention of God in worldly affairs, *Hamlet* the play is decidedly ambivalent about this doctrine: Claudius hopes that prayers and spiritual works will offer some remedy for his sins, but his endeavours fall short. Evidently Claudius's status as the drama's villain purports it is imperative his prayers *do* fail, and he receives punishment in due course.[325]

Similarly, Protestant debates over matters regarding representation and signs of theological concerns invigorated much early modern drama, as Huston Diehl has shown in his *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England*.[326] Shakespeare's *Pericles* determines to avow a reconciliatory connection between the visual components theatre unavoidably adopts, and the acute condemnation of false and misleading visual signs the reformers upheld undermined true faith. This eclecticism – as we will see – allows the play to amend markedly Protestant arguments, compelling them to challenge themselves in order to endorse dramatic representation and the potency of human agency.

Paul was one of the key figures for reformers eager to return Christianity to its earliest beliefs.[327] Yet, Pauline theology is remarkably complex and inconsistent, dependent upon the particular circumstances of its own polemic and rhetorical origins; add to this the refractory interpretation of a range of (recurrently) subtle later theologians – keen to seal Paul's ambiguous cracks – and a regular, reliable position can be hard to locate, particularly with broad and indefinite issues such as fate and grace.[328] At best there is a variable discourse; at worst hopeless contradiction. Shakespeare and other early modern writers were keen to make use of this gap.

---

[322] Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[323] Cf. Matthew 10:29-31.

[324] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* 1.16.1

[325] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, [1st Edition, 2001] Expanded Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 14-34.

[326] Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[327] Jonathan Reed & John Crossan, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (London: Harper One, 2005), pp. 23-6, 213-32; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).

[328] Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (1991; 2nd Revised Edn, London: SPCK, 2005 Edn); Christoph Markschies & John Bowden (trans.), *Between Two Worlds: Structures of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1999); E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1983).

Paul speaks at length about grace. He insists that salvation be given to us only by grace and that it is impossible for us to obtain a perfect righteousness by our own faith or our own good works. It is Christ's faith and his works that count. For this reason, God gives us salvation by grace, as a free gift:

> For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast.
>
> (*Ephesians* 2:8)

Grace and works are to be regarded as opposites so that rewards come by the practice of works, but mercy comes by the application of grace.[329] Salvation is always and exclusively by grace, operating as the opposite to works or wages:

> And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.
>
> (*Romans* 11:6)

Without debate, grace is to be regarded a pure gift and accordingly detached from anything connected with works, wages, deeds or debts.[330] Paul shows that debts incurred by works and grace are opposites: 'Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt' (*Romans* 4:4). Grace is something bestowed when a person warrants the reverse and must be given generously and without restraint. Conversely, the law is always related with works and deeds.[331] The violation of law results in wages being paid: the wages of death (*Romans* 6:32). Sin and death come by law: 'the law entered, that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' (Romans 5:20). Grace came to counter the just demands of the law and while sin reigns unto death for all humans, 'even so might grace reign through righteousness unto age-lasting life by Jesus Christ our Lord' (*Romans* 5:21).[332]

There is clearly a rhetorical and polemical concern within Paul to distinguish between the old faith of Judaism and the new one instigated by Christ – something the later Protestant reformers similarly hoped to institute between themselves and Rome. Paul is ambivalent on predestinatory beliefs: on the one hand alert to the divine plan, but also keen to stress human agency and will in one's own salvation. He also has a markedly universalist (i.e. small 'c' catholic) view on salvation and an inclusive desire. Luther and Calvin would, however, take even further the dualism of faith and works, a duplexity compounded by the abuse of works that tarnished the medieval and early modern Church, and assert the preordained nature of human existence. Luther could connect faith and works, as the former acting through the

---

[329] J.M.G. Barclay, 'Grace within and Beyond Reason: Philo and Paul in Dialogue', in P. Middleton, A. Paddison & K.L. Wenell (eds), *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), pp. 9-21.

[330] Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: Wipf & Stock Publishing, 2006), pp. 45-61.

[331] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 11.

[332] Troels Engberg-Pedersen, '"Everything is Clean" and "Everything that is Not of Faith is Sin": The Logic of Pauline Casuistry in Romans 14.1-15.13', in P. Middleton, A. Paddison & K.L. Wenell (eds), *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), pp. 22-38.

latter, but for Calvin works are debarred absolutely, regarding the human will as insufficient, and utilising the Pauline conviction in God's eternal decrees.[333]

Yet Luther and Calvin's extremities were not of course the only interpretation of the mechanism of grace and works available to the early modern mind – and even their positions could be modified whether due to a more peaceable line of reasoning, or amid the density of theological argumentation. The Church of England's official doctrine was to be essentially Calvinist, as defined by the Lambeth Articles drawn up in 1595, and designed to settle a controversy that had arisen regarding whether God predestines men to eternal life and eternal damnation.[334] Nevertheless, when Elizabeth discovered that the Articles had been submitted and discussed at a synod without her permission or authority, she ordered that they be recalled and suppressed immediately, principally due to her unfavourable attitude towards Calvinism in general – she preferred a milder, more compromising approach in her Religious Settlement of 1559 and wished to keep it that way. James I too was equivocal concerning the High Calvinism many in his Church sought to advance.[335]

The doctrine of *supralapsarianism* (where each human soul is determined to damnation or salvation by God from eternity) was one that seemed better in abstract thought, rather than practical application, especially given the capricious will it gave a benevolent God.[336] Even among Calvinists, a more moderate position gained ground in the first part of the seventeenth century, and therefore a climate likely to have been swirling as Shakespeare came to write his tragicomedies, even if not officially recorded until later. In this stance, *sublapsarianism*, human sin after the fall comes into play. This gave a more personal aspect to the possibility of salvation, even if damnation was still the common plight. More moderate still were the followers of Jacobus Arminius, who argued for the potency of human free will in the processes of salvation, thus turning man from a passive beneficiary of divine grace to an active participant of one's destiny.[337] This theological modification – later to be influential in orthodox Anglican doctrine – seems to mirror the transition Shakespeare makes from the determinist tragedies[338] to the more sceptical tragicomedies (even if, as ever, the connection between drama and doctrine is indefinite).

Pericles stages a mixture of good fortune and deliverance (which Calvin regarded as pagan superstition and a denial of God's control), allied to personal penance and punishment. Yet Pericles himself can appear Calvinist at his lowest ebb, making the case for a predestined view of his fate that is not simply an indicator of hopelessness. An over-elaborate quirk will ultimately reunite Pericles with Marina and Thaisa (and many of the families in the plays to come), and one which might be regarded as Calvin's 'special providence', an unreformed miracle, or purely the workings of dramatic action. For Shakespeare, it is as likely to be an instance of all three at once. Metaphorical and actual storms litter the play, suggesting the

---

[333] Charlotte Methuen, *Luther and Calvin: Religious Revolutionaries* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011), p. 9.

[334] V. Miller, *The Lambeth Articles: Doctrinal Development and Conflict in 16th Century England* (London: Latimer House Press, 1994), pp. 19-20.

[335] M. E. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 2004), pp. 5-7.

[336] John Bray, 'Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination', *Church History* 41 (4:1972), p. 531; John Fesko, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville: Reformed Academic Press, 2001).

[337] Cf. Kenneth Fincham & Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship: 1547-c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[338] Though, of course, the tragedies have their voices against determinism – Edgar and Edmund in *Lear*, for example.

indifference of the divine will, but also generating the action of the drama or reflecting the psychological pandemonium of Pericles' mind.[339] There is a constant allusion to the workings of providential fortune in *Pericles* that tends towards predestination even as it stays away from it: the play floats between a strong and weak meaning of destiny, the one akin to luck and chance, the other to divine ordination. At the end of the first Act, Pericles accepts Cleon's hospitality with the astrological couplet:

> Which welcome we'll accept, feast here awhile,
> Until our stars that frown lend us a smile.
>
> <div align="right">(I.iv.105-6)</div>

Immediately following on from this, Gower in the Chorus to Act II describes Pericles' journey and shipwreck to Pentapolis as 'fortune, tired with doing bad' (II.0.37), before Pericles himself launches into a speech decrying his fate in extremely Calvinist language:

> Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!
> 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:
> Alas, the sea hath cast me on the rocks,
> Wash'd me from shore to shore, and left me breath
> Nothing to think on but ensuing death:
> Let it suffice the greatness of your powers
> To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes;
> And having thrown him from your watery grave,
> Here to have death in peace is all he'll crave.
>
> <div align="right">(II.i.1-11)</div>

Then, during his exchange with the fishermen, Pericles talks of 'Thanks fortune' (II.i.109) in delivering him of his armour. Throughout the drama, there is an interplay and flux between the determining forces of the divine and the auspicious elements of providence, and indeed this forms one of the play's key dynamics. The play subtly manipulates the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-determinist and interventionist points of view towards the service of the drama's vitality.

Pericles' own actions have a role to play, too: whatever the Reformation's often ambivalent view of false works and signs, it still argued for positive exertions and self-improvement, and Pericles undergoes this self-punishment to the point of being near catatonic by the final act. The tragicomic vehicle provides a structural framework that permits Pericles to both accept the determining forces of his destiny in a somewhat passive manner, and yet also undergo attempts to compel his nature towards penance and redemption. Yet, like Posthumus in *Cymbeline* and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, Pericles remains to some extent untransformed, his 'inner' self stays unchanged, and he requires the agency of some other personality to fulfil his redemption. This is the role played by his daughter Marina and the Lord Cerimon, both of whom most strongly argue against the Calvinist determinism

---

[339] Ruth Nevo, 'The Perils of Pericles', in Shakespeare's Other Language (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 33-61. Cf. Gwilym Jones, Ch.8 '*Pericles*', in *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 175-193.

Pericles resolves for himself, even if they cannot quite be identified with Catholic characteristics (in a way that one might appreciate Gower[340]). Cerimon through his safeguarding of Thaisa endorses the task of human agency (*cf*. III.ii.24). Yet there is an equivocation to Cerimon's belief in the powers of intervention: he appears to regard the 'virtue' and 'cunning' (the latter in the sense of 'wisdom' or 'talent', and without the modern connotation of 'slyness') that make men like gods, as structurally preset and not obtained through deeds.

For reformed Protestants, a chief source of godly anger was the idolatry of misplaced worship, which in Calvin's view (as in Paul's) is the chief sin of humankind.[341] If God was to be a forthcoming caller because the Last Days were fast drawing near, he would be especially incensed to behold his people still abiding idols in his places of devotion. Everything must be taken care of if God's will was to be done, and so the stress across Europe on the obliteration of images. Iconoclasts in England, from Henry VIII's reign on, voyaged about the country's churches and cathedrals disfiguring any statues of saints or God that gave the impression to them of being idolatrous, that is seemed to contravene the order in the Ten Commandments against venerating images,[342] or led to the worship of saints (or some particular creative handiwork) other than God – actions which scar religious buildings to this day. The destruction of images was often the result of impulsive mob aggression, but more often than not they were casualties of more measured rumination and officious fastidiousness. Most English images were taken down with legitimate authorization: bishops, church stewards and so forth, who knew the foremost concern was one of sacred power: an image need not be completely smashed in order to eradicate its influence – indeed, spoilt images articulate very accurately the conquest of superstition, and so the cleansing of the holy place. Hence much of the medieval art that has survived is fragmentary in nature – faces scraped out, arms lopped off, and so on.[343]

Despite all this, the received binary of a Protestant abhorrence in visual signs against a Catholic embrace of them needs rectification and qualification for it tends to create the wrong impression of both. Reforming iconoclasts – in the vein of earlier Church writers such as Paul – had, within their polemical and rhetorical contexts, an instinctive need to malign the false messages visual signs can communicate. However, images cannot be wholly banished because of the substance both Paul and the reformers placed on the supremacy of oratorical representation and its task in the determining of human activity: in order to communicate plainly and effectively it was necessary for opulent verbal images to be employed. The varieties of essential economics form some of Paul and the gospel writers' most memorable metaphorical imagery when discussing the message of Christ's Word. The Word is to be considered as being the same as these assets, and must consequently be discovered by the

---

[340] Cerimon describes himself as having studied 'physic' and is shown prescribing medication. Despite his references to nature, his allusions to 'secret art' and 'making man a god' (III.ii.31) suggest the supernatural powers of an older tradition. His name also – perhaps – implies the 'ceremony' of previous customs. Gower is referred to in *Confessio Amantis* as a physician and scholar.

[341] See: Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: the Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (repr. London: Routledge, 2011); Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: the Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[342] Cf. Book of Exodus

[343] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 558-63. See also: Susan Doran & Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: the Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (revised edn., London: Routledge, 2002); John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* (Oxford: John Wiley, 2002).

use of images, albeit invented verbal ones. Thus even language can operate in the same way as visual images, iconoclasts seem obliged to admit.

Luther's attitude to visual images is more nuanced and inclusive than he is often given credit for:

> Now we do not request more than that one permit us to regard a crucifix or a saint's image as a witness, for remembrance, as a sign as that image of Caesar was. Should it not be as possible for us without sin to have a crucifix or an image of Mary, as it was for the Jews and Christ himself to have an image of Caesar who, pagan and now dead, belonged to the devil? Indeed the Caesar had coined his image to glorify himself. However, we seek neither to receive nor give honour in this matter, and are yet so strongly condemned, while Christ's possession of such an abominable and shameful image remains uncondemned.[344]

> Where however images or statues are made without idolatry, then such making of them is not forbidden … [M]y image breakers must also let me keep, wear, and look at a crucifix or a Madonna … as long as I do not worship them, but only have them as memorials.[345]

> But images for memorial and witness, such as crucifixes and images of saints, are to be tolerated … And they are not only to be tolerated, but for the sake of the memorial and the witness they are praiseworthy and honourable.[346]

When, in the 1520s, Luther embarked on translating the Hebrew and Greek books of the Bible into German his chief purpose was to produce a text in a universal dialect that would inaugurate to the laity the word of God. Yet, something in Luther's *mode of thinking* prohibited him from circulating the book without some *illuminating* artwork. Luther appears to have no reservations about the inclusion of images of God within his Bible, so long as they were there for enlightening and didactic purposes.[347] Moreover, in the Augsburg Confession of June 1530, Luther confirmed that images (along with church holidays, calendars, and festivals) are useful for religious adherence, but that observance and ritual is not necessary for salvation.[348] In a similar fashion, Luther retained the saints, not as saviours or intercessors to God, but rather as examples and inspirations to our own faith and life.

---

[344] *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525), in: *Luther's Works*, 55 Vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan [Vol. 1-30] & Helmut T. Lehmann [Vol. 31-55] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [Vol. 1-30]; Philadelphia: Fortress Press [Vol. 31-55], 1955), Vol. 40, p. 96.

[345] *Ibid.*, pp. 86,88.

[346] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[347] The celebrated Nurembergian printer and printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), increasingly affected by Luther's writings, nevertheless like Luther saw no incongruity in his creation of religious imagery. Cf. Giulia Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy* (London: British Museum Press, 2002). Quotation from Dürer's letter to the secretary of the Elector of Saxony, p. 204.

[348] This underlines the Lutheran notion of justification by faith with regard to good works: it does not somehow condemn good works; rather, faith causes one to do good works as a sign of our justification (or salvation), but is again not a requirement for salvation.

Calvin's approach to visual images is severe, arguing that they lead to idolatry,[349] yet he is able to give credibility to the potential of verbal images through metaphor, and even occasionally to material signs. The initial proclamation in Calvin's *Institutes* acknowledges its central theme that the sum of human wisdom consists of two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves. He argues that knowledge of God is not intrinsic to humanity nor can it be realized by observing this world; the only way to acquire it is to study scripture. Calvin writes, 'For anyone to arrive at God the Creator he needs Scripture as his Guide and Teacher.'[350] He does not try to prove the authority of scripture but rather describes it as *autopiston* or self-authenticating.[351] Calvin compares Scripture to being akin to a pair of spectacles that allow us to correctly interpret what we see in creation:

> For as the aged, or those whose sight is defective, when any book, however fair, is set before them, though they perceive that there is something written, are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but, when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in our minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly.[352]

Moreover, Calvin held that inscripturation is necessary to steer clear of the errors inherent in oral communication:

> For if we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on devising new and fictitious religions, it will be easy to understand how necessary it was to make such a depository of doctrine as would secure it from either perishing by the neglect, vanishing away amid the errors, or being corrupted by the presumptuous audacity of men.[353]

Traversing the interrelated dilemmas of the interpretation of biblical typology and imagery, Calvin encourages Jews to embrace the new covenant with God, asserting that all 'the children of the promise, reborn of God, who have obeyed the commands by faith working through love, have belonged to the New Covenant since the world began.'[354] Abraham's covenant with God contained deceptive and vacant physical signs, but Calvin contends that Israelites can behold, 'as a mirror', their future inheritance of heaven, should they renegotiate their relationship with God through Christ.[355] Thus, empty signs such as the Law – with its ceremonial symbol of authentication but paucity of substance – are rejected. Calvin is cautious in permitting some visual signs to act as conveyors of the spirit, provided that

---

[349] T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), pp. 29-34. See also: Bernhard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids & Edinburgh: William B. Eerdemans, 2000).

[350] *Ibid*., p. 21.

[351] David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 59-62.

[352] *Institutes*, I.vi.1, in: Richard Lischer, *The Company af Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 362.

[353] *Institutes*, I.vi.3.

[354] J. Marius J. Lange van Ravenswaay, 'Calvin and the Jews', in Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvijn Handboek* [*The Calvin Handbook*], trans. Kampen Kok (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), p. 144, quoting from Calvin's Institutes, II.xi.10.

[355] *Institutes*, II.xi.1. Cf. G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 51.

significance originates from the spirit that enlightens the sign, rather than the sign containing import in itself (lest the inconsequential representations of the Old Testament Law, or say theatrical exhibition, acquire conditionally idolatrous meaning).[356]

Reformation controversies over indulgences and transubstantiation had created a fractured relationship between objects and their meaning, and there existed a yearning to rediscover the substance and implication attendant on the words and images which were the constitution of religious (i.e., daily) life.[357] Theologians could only pronounce of transubstantiation as a hypothesis that it was maintained by the majority of judgement amongst the holy men of the Church, and should be believed as a matter of faith. Once that faith in the Church's medieval establishment was contested, as it was in the sixteenth century, the foundation for trust in transubstantiation was severely undermined.[358]

Developing his theme of priestly fraud, Luther directed the clergy's consideration to the sacraments which they managed, and suggested a redefinition of correctly scriptural sacrament. A genuine sacrament consisted of a divine pledge indicated by a divine sign: baptism and the Eucharist.[359] Luther argued that the laity must drink wine and eat bread during communion. Yet it was his attack on the theology of the Mass that was scandalous: Christ's sacrament should not be perceived through Aristotle's discrimination, and regarded as a thing for logical investigation, but accepted in natural faith through the words of scripture (something remarkably similar to the suspension of disbelief required by the theatre). Calvin agreed that physical signs and sacraments (which were for Calvin everything God decided to allow) under guarded conditions have usefulness, even meaning if they do not aspire to the status of the word or spirit, as professed through unreformed rhetoric.

It is clear, therefore, that although a large number of puritanical anti-theatricalists and iconophobes would declare signs as visual representation (especially in plays) to be idolatrous and a sin, many prominent theologians of the Reformation argued instead for the correct discernment and discrimination between virtuous and corrupt signs – whether as linguistic signification or visual representation – rather than their total abolition. Exhibitions of theatre, and other physical displays, could also then be regarded in this light: as not wicked *in themselves*, but rather as having the potential to flaunt immorality. It is this refinement of good judgement that *Pericles* stages. Tossed from port to port and false sign to false sign, Pericles' moral and mental flaws are exposed by his inability to accurately read signs. His recovery occurs when his daughter's words and physical company are communicated as wondrous embodiments of the spirit's grace.

Two daughters trapped in sexual slavery create the most obvious true/ false binary in the drama, so that a perilous womanly sign can become one of rescue, even if this integrity is complicated by the incestuous connotations Marina herself carries. Marina's uninvited confinement to the brothel parallels the behaviour of Antiochus's daughter, ensnared in her incestuous (false) relationship with her father.[360] Pericles' superficial thoughts to Antiochus's

---

[356] C. Augustus Pater, 'Calvin, the Jews, and the Judaic Legacy', in E. J. Furcha, *In Honor of John Calvin: Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1987), p. 44.

[357] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (1991; Revised Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 369-419.

[358] A. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 198.

[359] Luther initially included penance, but later acknowledged his inconsistency and removed it.

[360] There is also Antiochus's call for music (I.i.6), ironically foreshadowing the 'music of the spheres' (V.i.217) in the recognition scene: music – like dance or theatre – can be both a signifier for corruption and distraction, or divine enhancement and celebration.

daughter in the play's opening scene reveal his mistaking her bodily manifestation for 'the unspotted fire of love' (I.i.54). His continual application of religious imagery[361] to invoke her physical wonders is deeply incongruous and hyperbolically suggests the impurity of his mission, a contamination that infects the play, even beyond its conclusion. Characters and places are corrupt and damaged, fallen and polluted, amid a world of bewildering storms: spiritual metaphor and synthetic dramaturgy vie for attention in the narrative.

Sex and religion were often linked, particularly in the dangerous coupling of the near homonyms idolatry and adultery in early modern writing, as Alison Shell has pointed out.[362] The chronic iconoclast William Perkins maintained the connection in a peculiarly hypnotic sermon from the late sixteenth century:

> Adulterie is the punishment of Idolatrie: and Idolatrie the punishment of Adulterie … [N]ote the order of these sinnes: First, [sinners] are drawn to sit at idols feasts, and then to commit adulterie: where we see that the two sinnes go together. Spirituall adulterie, that is, idolatry; and bodily adultery, one is the plague & punishment of the other.[363]

Human love and sex – whether adulterous, incestuous or otherwise – was to be considered inferior to one's ardour for God and contained a potentially idolatrous risk to it (and contemporary misogyny with regard to both feminine laxity and Marian idolatry made it a simple claim).[364] Shakespeare and his contemporaries took up this discourse – the Sonnets continually play on religio-sexual double meanings: 105 in particular, where the conceit underlying the verse is that:

> the poet has one god only, the friend, who embodies a Trinitarian unity of *Three themes in one*. Hence he is not committing idolatry by worshipping several idols. The apparent aim of the poem is to exclude uncertainty both of reference and of meaning – its subject is the friend and its aim is to describe his qualities with a simplicity which approaches tautology (*fair*, *kind*, and *true*). This aspiration is necessarily idolatrous, however, since its object is not God but the friend.[365]

The Sonnet-infused *Romeo and Juliet* is where Shakespeare most fully cross-examines fashionable attitudes to romantic love and Catholic conventions. 'Romeo woos Juliet as a saintly statue able to grant prayers'[366] and the play not only breathes a religious and biblical language reassigned to instances of secular love, but teases out the amusement and import of this altercation. Shakespeare is also keen to explore the contested issue of the veneration of saintly statues (as the lovers are to be memorialised in gold) and invites us to question – as Luther and Calvin also recognised – the fine line between exemplarity and idolatry. On the

---

[361] For example: 'fruit of yon celestial tree' (I.i.22); 'grip not at earthly joys as erst they did' (l.50).
[362] Shell, *Religion*, pp. 58-64.
[363] *Ibid*., p. 58, quoting from William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition … Upon … Revelation* (1606: preached 1595).
[364] For an account of the proximity of idolatry/ adultery impressions in *The Winter's Tale*, see: Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 185-96.
[365] See: Colin Burrow, ed., *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2008), p. 590n (Burrow's italics).
[366] Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 1.

one hand Romeo and Juliet are to be symbols of harmonious civic ideal; but they might also be honoured for the wrong reasons.

Pericles' conflation of the signifying languages of sexual and religious love in Antioch sets the tone for the continual misapprehension of signs in the sphere around him. Characters and audience alike are confused or misled in their interpretations of people or events: Thaisa's 'death' in childbirth; Dionyza's guardianship of Marina; the squalls which buffet and wreck Pericles but which, in their course, bear fruit. In Matthew 12, Jesus makes a reference to Jonah – like Pericles, consumed and ejected by the sea – when he is asked for a miraculous sign by the Pharisees. Jesus says that the sign will be the sign of Jonah, suggesting (especially if we ourselves read it typologically) that Jonah's restoration after three days of piscine incarceration anticipates his own death and resurrection:

> He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here." [367]

Another false sign we will come to is Marina's 'funeral' – described by Gower as a 'foul show' (IV.iv.23), picking up on the potential for theatre to convey deceit. Yet reformed theology (as we have seen with Calvin) could equate spirit and sign (if the one imbues the other) giving sensory abilities or material form/ objects a surprising capacity in conferring and confirming truth and retrieval. Marina is finally brought to her (ignorant and broken-hearted) father by Lysimachus to all intents and purposes as a *commodity*, if not an actual sex worker, in order to cheer Pericles up and get him to speak:

> LORD: Sir, we have a maid in Mytilene, I durst wager
>   Would win some words of him.
> LYSIMACHUS: 'Tis well bethought.
>   She questionless, with her sweet harmony
>   And other choice attractions, would allure
>   And make a battery through his defeated ports
>   Which now are midway stopped.
>   (V.i.35-40)

There is a crucial undercurrent of sexuality to this scene – Lysimachus after all first met Marina upon his visit to the brothel – but it is also the physical indication of Marina's being that is significant: her physical femininity is to be exploited, and ultimately yields beneficent results.[368]

Marina's lost mother Thaisa's identity in the final scene is similarly authenticated by Cerimon via a pageant of physicality: 'Look to the lady' (V.iii.21); 'I oped the coffin, / Found there rich jewels' (ll.23-4); 'May I see them?' (l.25); 'O, let me look! / If he be none of mine, my sanctity / Will to my sense bend no licentious ear, / But curb it spite of seeing' (ll.28-31);

---

[367] Matthew, 12:39-41.
[368] The use of women to rouse those near death has a biblical dimension (I Kings 1:1-4) and Ben Jonson lampooned the notion in his contemporaneous *Volpone* (1606).

'The voice of dead Thaisa!'[369] (l.34); 'T: The king my father gave you such a ring. / P: This, this!' (ll.39-40). Sight and objects here institute and substantiate the nonrepresentational truths of being. As Calvin argued with his broad definition of sacraments, under exceptional conditions any*thing* can become a renewing or restorative sign: fortune, coincidence, providence and predestination thus combine, swap and coalesce their meanings.

Pericles stages an integration of (repossessed) traditional signs with the more reformed emphasis of substance granted by divine denotation. Words exchanged between people ironically employ the (Calvinist) argument that visual signs can be made to signify the divine spirit, in order to endorse the rituals and traditions of the stage against iconoclasm and iconophobia.

Shakespeare is never coy about conceding the fundamental spuriousness of theatrical representation – by its very nature it is 'put-on' and 'made-up' – yet sometimes he goes beyond this to assert our personal vision and interpretation of theatre as a story we *experience*. In Gower's Chorus of IV.iv, preparatory to the 'foul show' of Marina's fake interment, he appears by Marina's fabricated monument and as he talks, figuratively links nautical language with that of the imagination, essentially through the concept of narrative as a voyage. The speech switches from octosyllabics to less 'medievalizing' heroic couplets:

> Thus time we waste, and longest leagues make short;
> Sail seas in cockles, have an wish but for't;
> Making, to take your imagination,
> From bourn to bourn, region to region.
> By you being pardon'd, we commit no crime
> To use one language in each several clime
> Where our scenes seem to live. I do beseech you
> To learn of me, who stand i' the gaps to teach you,
> The stages of our story. Pericles
> Is now again thwarting the wayward seas,
> Attended on by many a lord and knight.
> To see his daughter, all his life's delight.
> Old Escanes, whom Helicanus late
> Advanced in time to great and high estate,
> Is left to govern. Bear you it in mind,
> Old Helicanus goes along behind.
> Well-sailing ships and bounteous winds have brought
> This king to Tarsus,—think his pilot thought;
> So with his steerage shall your thoughts grow on,
> To fetch his daughter home, who first is gone.
> Like motes and shadows see them move awhile;
> Your ears unto your eyes I'll reconcile.

(IV.iv.1-22)

Gower has not only drolly networked his own story(-telling) with ambiguous or disingenuous visual depiction, but at this moment the play becomes a wordless drama of mimed false

---

[369] Compare Cymbeline in his recognition and reconciliation scene: 'The tune of Imogen!' (*Cymbeline*, V.iv.239).

representation: a dumb show portraying a phony funeral is enacted. Marina's effigy at Tarsus, with Dioniza's bathetic and misplaced dedication, seems to be the 'foul show' which memorializes corrupt art and irresolute fatherhood. It represents an inadequate imitation of Marina, who herself truthfully replicates and transcends Pericles: 'The analogy between biological, artistic, and fraudulent reproductions develops a paradox about art and life. Marina, as a symbol of art, surpasses the life she copies; as a representation of procreative life, she shows up the deficiencies of art.'[370] Is the 'foul show' the bogus art of the statue, the pretence of the dumb show as drama, the play *Pericles* itself, the presentation of the characters within that play, or indeed the proficiencies of the actors as performers in all of this? Such encrusted significances are in keeping with this temporally and spatially multi-layered work, and the very agglomeration of falsity clarifies many of the awkward associations: Cleon and Dioniza's fictitious anguish lie within the simulated dumb show, itself part of Gower's Chorus, that is in turn a component of and surrounded by a tragicomic drama, *Pericles*. Seen like this, such obvious illusion conjures respect and veneration for the apparatuses of artfulness and representation, not mistrust in their artificiality.[371]

So, just as with Iachimo's gazing on Imogen in her bedchamber in *Cymbeline*, Gower places figurative and emblematic questions of representation within the doctrinal issue of sin, since they remind us that we as spectators have the potential to sinfully/ inappropriately look upon *Pericles*, just as Pericles has immorally/ improperly looked upon Antiochus's daughter. Gower's solution is the reconciliation, or juxtaposition, between heard signs and seen signs ('Your ears unto your eyes'), so that the verbal invests the visual with meaning, whilst also acting as a protective remedial to the abuse of false representation. A basically Protestant line of reasoning is thus ironically employed by the Catholic Gower to defend his creator's (secular) theatrical indulgences from Protestant iconophobic censure.

It is this union of word and image that allows the play to further unite the twin saving mechanisms of works and grace that generated so many of the Reformation's fiercest discourses. Although we have been considering the post-Reformation's particular ideological discussions, the other augmenting ones from non-Christian/ pagan backgrounds within the *Pericles* narrative both enhance and complicate interpretation.

The *Pericles* universe fluctuates between an awareness of immanent providence where 'gods are quick of ear' (IV.i.67) and acquiescence to a thoroughly capricious Fortune whose disposition persistently alters. Yet the primary characters are assisted – the plot suggests – by a more altruistic influence than temperamental Fortune: Diana, to whom all three of the principals pronounce dedication, and in whose temple at Ephesus the play culminates.

THAISA:	O dear Diana, where am I? Where's my lord?
	What world is this?
	(III.ii.104-05)

PERICLES:	Your honour and your goodness teach me to't
	Without your vows. Till she be married, madam,
	By bright Diana whom we honour all,
	Unscissored shall this hair of mine remain,

[370] Phyllis Gorfain, 'Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles'*, in *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976), p. 19.
[371] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

> Though I show ill in't. So I take my leave.
> Good madam, make me blessed in your care
> In bringing up my child.
>
> > (III.iii.27-33)

> MARINA: If fires be hot, knives sharp or waters deep,
> Untried I still my virgin knot will keep.
> Diana, aid my purpose!
>
> > (IV.ii.138-40)

Rather than seeing this Diana as Ovid's 'chaste huntress', some have argued that Diana is 'best understood with respect to the Mother-worship that flourished in the territory of Phrygia, the home province of Ephesus.'[372] However, her function as administrating divinity is across all of the play, so she must defend Marina's chastity *and* reinstate the fertile union of Pericles and Thaisa. As Caroline Bicks has argued:

> Diana was a scion of a pre-Hellenic fertility/ mother goddess … By the time she reached the early modern period, she was a constellation of contradictions … As the Greek Artemis and the Roman Diana, she protected virginity; as Hecate, she embodied the mysteries of female power; her association with the procreative Amazons and the ancient fertility goddess led to her formulation as Luna, goddess of the moon, and Lucina, the Roman goddess of childbirth.[373]

This multifaceted, paradoxical goddess befits the play's own intricate attitude towards the gods/ God, iconography, and the dispositions of fate and fortune: the apparently contradictory patronage of both virginity and fertility seems appropriate for the ironic doctrinal juxtapositions *Pericles* undertakes. Diana's Temple, where the mother Thaisa works as a votaress[374] was frequently associated with fecundity but may also have incorporated an Anglican regression towards more particularly Catholic positions, figuring the 'heated debate … that centred on the maternal body and concerned the place of Catholic ritual in Protestant practice.'[375] When Thaisa 'a vestal livery will I take' (III.iv.9) she is to bear the clothes and life of a vestal virgin, devoted to watching over the fire in the Roman temple of Vesta, goddess of the hearth. Thaisa's removal from the social order and as a sexual being after Marina's birth also perhaps functions as a symbol for the extended lying-in interlude newly delivered mothers in the early modern period undertook, a period customarily brought to an end with a ceremonial act of cleansing ('churching') originating in Judaism but maintained in Catholicism. By the Reformation, however, the rite was regarded as too ceremonious, reassigning faculty from the minister to the mother: thus the play participates in the intense theological discourses that focused 'on the nurturing body and problematized Catholic ritual within Protestant procedures.[376]

---

[372] F. Elizabeth Hart, 'Cerimon's "rough music" in *Pericles*, 3.2', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000), pp. 313-331.

[373] Caroline Bicks, 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the churching of women', in Skeele, *Pericles*, p. 207.

[374] IV.0.4.

[375] Bicks, 'Backsliding', p. 207.

[376] *Ibid*., p. 207.

Bicks goes on to argue Thaisa's restoration is more indistinct when linked with the pagan/ Catholic rituals, so that it is 'both authorized and illicit'. Others have gone even further: for Elizabeth Hart, since the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in A.D. 431 proclaimed Mary 'god-bearer' (Μαρία Θεοτόκος), the play's Diana, performing at Ephesus, evokes her and it is she who ultimately confers 'legitimacy upon the father/ Father in his role as monarch.'[377] There is more potency (and accuracy) to the term 'god-bearer'[378] than the usual English translation 'Mother of God', since Mary did not create the divine person of Jesus, who existed with the Father from all eternity, and is not the source of her Son's divinity. The other chief use of 'Mother of God' has been as the exact literal translation of Μήτηρ Θεού, a Greek term which has a recognized custom of its own in traditional Orthodox and Catholic theological writing, hymnography, and iconography. In a shortened form, MP ΘY, it often is located on Eastern icons, to identify Mary.[379] Within the Orthodox and Catholic tradition, 'Mother of God' has not generally been understood, nor been intended to be understood, as referring to Mary as Mother of God *from eternity* – that is, as Mother of God the Father – but only with reference to the birth of Jesus in the Incarnation.[380] All this endorses the troubling (and potentially incestuous) paradox of Mary as both mother and child of God, as Diana is both patron of fertility and chastity: they are oxymora that are also revelatory; enigmas that disclose truth; and faith, by definition, needs tests, inscrutabilities and conundrums (much as *Pericles* does – a play both dramatically established upon Antiochus's riddle and eventually unable or unwilling to resolve its own brooding tensions).

Paradox lies at the centre of Christianity and the Christian experience, so that self-contradictory statements may in fact be true, especially when regarded from the broader temporal perspective of the divine. Thus we see unseen things; we conquer through yielding; we reign by serving; we live by dying. Matthew's Jesus and Paul elucidate the paradox of faith:

> He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

> (Matthew 10:38)

> By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

> (2 Cor. 6:7-10)

The decisive and principal paradox of Christianity is the divine incarnate, the figure of Jesus as both God and man. For Howard Felperin, the redemptive father and child love seen in

---

[377] F. Elizabeth Hart, '"Great is Diana" of Shakespeare's Ephesus', Studies in English Literature 43 (2003), pp. 347-74.

[378] Jaroslav Pelikan translated it even more precisely as 'the one who gives birth to the one who is God'. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 55.

[379] Richard M. Price, 'The *Theotokos* and the Council of Ephesus', in Chris Maunder (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns and Oates, 2008), pp. 89-104.

[380] 'We recognize the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Theotókos, the mother of God incarnate, and so observe her festivals and accord her honour among the saints.' *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II, 2004).

Pericles parallels that of the Christian mystery;[381] still, the play's concluding unions and reunions struggle to assimilate the variant schemes at work in the drama, particularly through the inescapable threat of incest, that makes us 'experience [the Christian] mystery in the light of [this] incest.'[382] When Pericles and Marina reunite, the father's 'words [hover] uneasily between regeneration and – potentially mutual – erotic desire':[383] 'thou that beget'st him that did thee beget'.[384] Theatrically unsettling and menacing, incest is an incessant ethereal insinuation within the entire drama, and is not inevitably averred at the play's end. However, the exact associations of such incestuous engagements – whether merely liminal or a contravention – need to be considered, and perhaps on an individual basis from the culture in which they are implanted; in *Hamlet*, after all, only the son and ghost give the impression of finding the Gertrude-Claudius alliance incestuous; for the others it seems, if not ordinary or to be welcomed, at least an inevitable aspect of life, especially a royal one.

As Charles R. Forker and Lois Bueler have observed, incest is remarkably frequent in the drama of this period, occurring in around several dozen early modern works (though more can be added if the take its more equivocal forms in *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* or *Measure for Measure*).[385] In terms of sexual-marital alliances, incest can be regarded as the extreme constraint at the opposite end to the limits provided by miscegenation (especially in the broader, exogamic sense including culture, class or religion, rather than simply race); the ideal partnership then falls somewhere along this continuum. For ruling elites in particular, marriage has a particular significance beyond personal fulfilment, so that racial, theological, political, and/ or economic factors are substantial dynamics in any given union. Marriage, and the sexual relations concomitant on it, was a complex socio-religious process; for ordinary citizens it bestowed rights and privileges single persons did not have. Connubial pairs were required to a greater extent than their unattached equivalents to be regular churchgoers and morally virtuous citizens, leading by example to their charges, and to the community at large, so that matrimonial status appreciably shaped the habits and conducts through which spouses interacted with their civic surroundings.[386]

Announcements publicizing the intentional nuptials needed to be posted by the church some weeks before the envisioned solemnization; these 'banns' were customary for the generality of marriages and advocated by The Book of Common Prayer. Such a public announcement of proposed marriage naturally served as a defence against prohibitively kindred or non-consensual unions. Nonetheless, in certain circumstances couples might be permitted to jettison the public dissemination of these banns through acquiring a permit from the ecclesiastical authorities. A sanction such as this offered more plasticity and discretion than the more lingering and shared bann-posting practice:

---

[381] Howard Felperin, 'This Great Miracle: *Pericles*', in David Skeele, ed., '*Pericles*': *Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Press, 2000), pp. 114-132.

[382] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 392n.

[383] *Ibid.*, p. 392.

[384] V.i.185

[385] Charles R. Forker, '"A Little More than Kin, and Less than Kind": Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism, and Identity in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama', in *Fancy's Images: Contexts, Settings, and Perspectives in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), pp. 141-68; Lois E. Bueler, 'The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama', *Renaissance Drama* XV (1984), Leonard Barkan, ed., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1984), pp. 115-45.

[386] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage & Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 233-88; 285.

An ecclesiastical license allowed a couple to marry in haste, when time was of the essence; it allowed them to marry during religious seasons when matrimony was otherwise prohibited; it permitted them to marry in a parish away from home, in the church or chapel of their choice; and it secured them a degree of privacy.[387]

Whether in public or relatively private, however, early modern marriage was something to be sanctioned and blessed by the local community and church, and the resultant family analogous to the state itself and underpinning the social, political and gender frameworks of the period.[388] Marriage lies at the heart of early modern culture and so the drama of the era reflects this, with plots clustering around matrimonies and their plentiful associated goings-on.[389]

As a potentially disruptive threat on this crucial procedure, incest challenges the parameters of appropriateness and tolerability. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, embarked in the 1560s to elucidate and streamline the Church's position on proscriptions to marriage, fashioning the Church of England's 'Table of Kindred and Affinity' – not least because the current laws were so restrictively all-encompassing as to include relatives linked by consanguinity to the seventh affinity and spiritual (compaternal) ones to the fourth.[390] As we will see, there was also of course a religio-political component: for Henry VIII to abrogate his marriage to Anne Boleyn (attained itself only via papal exemption), Roman Catholic law had to be broken with and legislation passed proclaiming the obligatory eminence of the Levitical prohibitions.[391] Under Mary's repositioning with Rome, this law was repealed, only to be subsequently re-inaugurated under Elizabeth – Parker redrafted and amended the legislation, remodelling it into his Table.[392] (As a specimen of Protestant theological and political ideology, it was later situated in the Book of Common Prayer, beginning with the post-Restoration 1662 edition.)

Parker's register delineated dozens of prohibited sexual concords per gender, including the closer kinsfolks (siblings, parents, grandparents) to their spouses (uncles, nieces, etc.). 12 controls pertained to blood relatives; 18 for those linked by matrimony (4th degree).[393] It did not explicitly censure step-siblings, first cousins or other seemingly close relations – even if such unions were strongly criticized (though a good degree of uncertainty existed within ecclesiastical adjudications).[394]

Most of the reasoning underpinning such forbidden unions came from the legacy of the Hebraic and biblical law, chiefly in Leviticus, namely 18:6-18 and 20:10-21, with its specific prohibition of a range of unlawful alliances, many of which originated with the nomadic desire to protect their encampments' concord.[395] Two passages have been particularly discussed in

---

[387] Cressy, *Birth*, p. 309.

[388] Su Fan Ng, *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-18.

[389] Kevin Curran, *Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

[390] V. J. K. Brook, *A Life of Archbishop Parker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 235-49; Conor McCarthy, ed., *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[391] Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:10-21.

[392] McCabe, *Incest*, p. 45.

[393] Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2004), p. 78.

[394] Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[395] John E. Hartley, ed., *Leviticus: Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. IV* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), pp. xiv-vi.

matters of exegesis, and would have implications beyond any abstract legal debates: Leviticus 18:16, which proscribes sexual union between a man and his brother's spouse; yet the so-called 'levirate' law of Deuteronomy 25:5-10 stated for a man to take his deceased brother's wife if that brother had expired without issue.[396] Such marriages were rare in early modern England, but Henry VIII had sought (and acquired) papal dispensation to marry his brother Arthur's wife Catherine of Aragon, claiming their marriage had not been consummated.[397]

Early Protestant bibles (such as the 1560 Geneva) inclined to circumvent the Leviticus/ Deuteronomy friction by glossing 'brother' as 'kinsman'.[398] Lying behind this decision, according to Jason Rosenblatt, was the annulment of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine on the grounds of incest: the Geneva Bible (along with others of the period such as the Coverdale and Bishop's) 'all distorted this verse into compliance with the Henrician emphasis on the unacceptability of the levirate.'[399] By 1611 and the King James bible, the term was (properly) rendered as 'brotherlawe' – the earlier adjustments perhaps fathomable since they facilitated the legitimacy of Edward and Elizabeth, and questioned the lawfulness of the (Catholic) Mary.

For Bruce Boehrer, early modern literature's interest with incest is shaped by the divorce-annulment problem of Henry VIII.[400] In *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England*, Boehrer carries out an analytical methodology that conjoins New Historicism with Lacanian psychoanalysis, postulating a political interpretation of incest that locates the association between identity construction and the sovereign via a family-state analogy. He suggests that the incest proscription functions as an agency of self-aggrandizement and self-preservation, especially for the monarchy, so that the affiliation between royal authority and the citizens' needs can habitually be construed as parent-child incest (either cultivating or condemning dictatorial monarchical control).

The majority of early modern citizens could appreciate the fundamentals of the interdictions on incest, particularly when they pertained to close-kin relations; people (and courts) became understandably more befuddled with regulating infringements of second, third and fourth degree affinity prohibitions. With the ecclesiastical not civil courts arraigning the bulk of instances regarding sexual endeavour, incest was still largely seen as a moral offence, and condemned wrongdoers were punished in a manner that sought improvement and reformation not retribution.[401] Undoubtedly it was reasonably rare for the ecclesiastical courts to prosecute for the crime (not least, because it would often be hard to prove or, indeed, apprehend the accused), though it is likely that actual instances of incest were much, much higher than any official records of the matter; fear and dishonour would also compel many cases simply never coming to light. For Keith Thomas, a 1650 Act (moving the offence

[396] Jay Sklar, ed., *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: I.V. Press, 2014), p. 346.

[397] Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1991; London: Vintage, 2007), pp. 15-142, esp. 15-19; Anne Cruz & Mihoko Suzuki, *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), pp. 131-6.

[398] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 255; Bruce Metzger, 'The Geneva Bible of 1560', *Theology Today* 17 (1960), p. 341.

[399] Jason Rosenblatt, 'Aspects of the Incest Problem in *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29:3 (1978), p. 357.

[400] Bruce T. Boehrer, *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England: Literature, Culture, Kinship, and Kingship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); cf. 'Man and Wife is One Flesh: *Hamlet* and the Confrontation with the Material Body' and 'Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body: The Return to Origins in the Romances' in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.11-37 & pp. 193-238, esp. 193-99.

[401] Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 244-7.

from supervision under canon law, and punishable by penance, to carrying a capital sentence) was a necessity rather than simply a demonstration of Puritan repression.[402]

Nevertheless, in view of the seriousness of the transgression, as well as an instinctive repugnance to it for most individuals, we can scarcely contend for an epidemic of incest in the period. Given the comparatively infrequent manifestation of incest in early modern life, what can we make of the wider attitudes that inform its recurrent employment – as plot, or metaphor, or both – in contemporary drama? Of course, there is the obvious titillation dynamic – a taboo, and especially a sexual one, is bound to occasion attention and curiosity (accompanied by indignation and denunciation, which would only intensify the interest). In many ways, we might regard the theatrical portrayals of incest as signalling the enduring apprehensions of a society experiencing an awkward and troublesome transition – from a culture still decidedly stratified by feudal restrictions, to one abruptly subjected to the prospects for deep-seated, sweeping economic, social and political development. Tillyard's 'Elizabethan world picture' and its idealistic illustration of early modern society is now justly problematized by bi- and multi-linear historical models, so that 'culture itself is not a unitary phenomenon; non-dominant elements interact with the dominant forms, sometimes coexisting with, or being absorbed or even destroyed by them, but also challenging, modifying or even displacing them.'[403] The experiences of society – as we have seen throughout this thesis – suggest that it was in truth a flexible and fluctuating arrangement, experiencing a succession of considerable vicissitudes. The ongoing enlargement of education, trades and the professions facilitated the flourishing, though nonetheless often resentful, acknowledgment of social progress, promotion and mobility (notwithstanding certain restrictions). Disparities still saturated society, yet 'to those well-placed to take advantage of the market opportunities of the day, notably the gentry, the merchants and the tradesmen of the towns and the yeomanry of the countryside, it brought an unprecedented level of prosperity.'[404] Even those not well-placed – like ambitious dramatists unconnected to the gentry – could see the enticing opportunities. Augment and stimulate this with the growth in exploration and trade, and England was simply a more diverse and expansive environment, social and geographic spheres opened up – and bringing tensions in consequence to the discernible positive benefits.

Just as social and political transformations can be invigorating and worthwhile or sullying and destructive to a culture, incest provokes responses that can be concurrently arousing, amusing and disturbing. A quantity of the enthrallment with, and functional use of, incest in early modern drama, thus communicates with the ostensibly dissimilar, detached and antagonistic beguilement with exogamy (see *Othello*, *The Island Princess* and any number of 'exotic' plays) and the incompatible pull and push of the cultural-social Other – which links to the pull and push of the cultural-social Similar. In *Pericles*, the incest motif is thus linked to the multiple temporal and cultural layers the play builds up. As Andrew James Johnston illuminates, in *Pericles*,

---

[402] Keith Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery: the Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in Keith Thomas & Donald Henshaw Pennington, eds, *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 257-82; 261.

[403] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (3rd Edition: Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 7.

[404] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (1982; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 223.

paradoxically, Shakespeare's multiple antiquities are made especially conspicuous through a decidedly anti-classicist genre framed in a consciously medievalizing manner. Such a framing adds another level of irony to the whole situation. Shakespeare provides his multiple antiquities with a frame derived from that very period which constitutes the excluded Other in the conventional Renaissance narrative of self-parturition through classical rebirth: the Middle Ages.[405]

In *Pericles*, incest abounds, literally, suggestively and figuratively throughout. We can see that Dionyza's homicidal preferentialism for her child is analogous to the incest exhibited in other parent-creation relationships in the play; though not sexual in nature it is nonetheless precarious, unsuitably disproportionate and entrenched in the mother's being. After Marina's ostensible 'murder', Dionyza accuses her husband Cleon of the converse to her predilection – not loving or not loving adequately: 'And though you call my course unnatural, / You not your child well loving, yet I find / It greets me as an enterprise of kindness / Performed to your sole daughter' (IV.iii.36-9). The loving or not loving of one's child – biological or adoptive – is the foundation of the drama and is its insistent reoccurrence; incest is thus the extreme alternate, the juncture at which loving excessively is as detrimental as not loving sufficiently (a privation exhibited through absence or neglect).

Cleon's shortcomings as a father are matched in Pericles's own life: not only in the relinquishment of his daughter, but correspondingly his own imposing, distant father and unspecified mother.[406] The play's spectators might have reprimanded such paternal remoteness, even if it was common and an often to be accepted part of their lives. Lawrence Stone has previously transmitted the assessment that most early modern familial relationships were muted, frigid affairs.[407] His work has come in for stern criticism, particularly from Ralph Houlbrooke,[408] and the scholarship of David Cressy and Antony Fletcher has further disclosed more multifaceted interactions to family life, with an penetrating tenderness frequently characterized by the bereavement and loss that was such a unrelenting aspect of culture in this period (and one that necessitated recurrent matrimonies and multifarious step- or foster-families).[409] Pericles's peregrinations are in part a quest for a forlorn father – he fails to find it in Antioch's king, but does in Pentapolis's Simonides; yet this paternalistic realization again brings with it the incestuous threat – a collective daughter-sister-wife is delivered with the father. Pericles delivers the play's final speech (before the epilogue) and notes that his (re)union with his wife Thaisa means that 'son and daughter shall in Tyrus reign' (V.iii.83); domestic familiarity is continuously pressuring so that the anxiety of incest is by no means completely abolished.

Even granting the potential for fathers to be absent, Pericles's detachment to his daughter is extreme, entirely abandoning her to Tarsus. The indifferent relationship he has with his daughter is conceivably in part due to the way in which she might remind him of her mother, Marina being a 'piece / Of [his] dead queen',[410] and thus endangering with the

---

[405] Johnston, 'Sailing', pp. 400-01.

[406] II.iii.33ff.

[407] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977; London: Allen Lane, 1990).

[408] See in particular Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (1998; New Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 14-5, for an overview of Stone's shortcomings.

[409] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage & Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Antony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997).

[410] III.i.16-7.

potential for incestuous desire, a peril that never leaves the play, even after Thaisa and Pericles's (briefly) restored marriage. As Carol Neely has argued, this latter union remains more tenuous and less strong than

> [the] reestablishment of the bond between parent and child and the the acknowledgment of the powerful physical connection between them overshadows in the romances the sexual union – or reunion – of husband and wife, who are "one flesh" only symbolically and by means of their children.[411]

We saw earlier how Ruth Nevo regarded the progression of the play as 'the haunting of Pericles by the Antiochus in himself, the incest fear which he must repress';[412] Richard McCabe, following C. L. Barber's argument for the 'sublime transformation of the motive',[413] found in *Pericles* 'the most forthright contribution to the drama of father-daughter incest since the medieval *Dux Moraud* … the final act is carefully designed as the thematic obverse of the first, and the gradual progress from damnation to redemption is meticulously executed.'[414] Liberating as the ending appears, however, it is plainly never unconditionally emancipated: Pericles's language retains oblique incestuous nuances; his reunion with Thaisa is ostensibly unsubstantiated; Marina's marriage is to a morally mistrustful character. Thus, the assiduous threat of incest cannot be entirely eradicated and endures beyond the play's conclusion. As Jeanie Moore has contended, in spite of – indeed, *because* of – the manufacture of a fantasy romance world in *Pericles*, with an array of generic-historical layers, where virtuousness and decency are eventually recompensed and regeneration is accomplished, incongruities contest an exclusively harmonious conclusion.[415] Generic and temporal conventions are challenged so that established representations of power, patriarchy and historicity experience a re-examination, as the play addresses familiar debates and rearranges their dynamics to accentuate the potential misjudgements in our assumptions of time and historical arrangements. As such, Andrew James Johnston has applicably maintained the importunate and engrossed function of incest in the drama is more than the 'troubling [of] the superficially serene surface of a pageant of religious miracles'[416] and can here be considered as a powerful metaphorical critique for historicities founded upon too teleological an ideology, those seeking to move in an undeviating course that expresses authority within successional, hereditary (usually patriarchal) advancements. Incest as a desire for returns is thus mounted as a 'critique of historical models depending on a radical and irreversible break with the past such as the one suggested by the Reformation'[417] (and Counter-Reformation): the 'incestuous subject seeks to escape from the pressures of a

---

[411] Carol Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (1985; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), esp. pp. 166-210; here, p. 175-6.

[412] Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (New York & London: Methuen, 1987), p. 42.

[413] C. L. Barber, '"Thou That Beget'st Him That Did Thee Beget": Transformation in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969), p. 64.

[414] Richard McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law* (1993; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 176-80.

[415] Jeanie G. Moore, 'Riddled Romance: Kinship and Kingship in *Pericles*', *Rocky Mountain Review* (2003), pp. 33-48; p. 34.

[416] Johnston, 'Sailing', p. 393.

[417] *Ibid*., p. 401.

historical ideal conceived in terms of a political exogamy, a history intent on reproducing the trajectory of a unidirectional linearity.'[418]

Following this line of argument, we can perhaps resolve to regard one of the opposite extremes to incest – parental negligence or inattention – as analogous to an isolating or self-promoting/ positioning of historical stages, the periodization that *Pericles* insists against. Historical periods cannot be separated from one another. The paradox of incest (concurrently pursuing in its engagement both prospective and regressive movement) is also the paradox of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation's theoretical substructures: simultaneously attempting to evade yet revert to the past; historically-constructed faiths denying the existence of history.

It is here that we can link to the analogous manner through which *Pericles* shows that there is no such thing as a right/ wrong Catholicism/ Protestantism when it comes to matters of representation and interpretation, since if either *appropriately* construe divine communication (whether in verbal or visual form) they remain the same (true) faith. The play is thus able to ironically tweak the reformed polemic against theatrical representation to promote the positive nuances of selected signs and symbols.

Marina's escape from bodily duplicity (virgin and whore) is an attempt to (re)generate her own originator in a process of virtuous fertility where the spirit-message imbues the misleading iconographical parent-child signs, and it is within Marina that the play's dialoguing with the efficacy of works/ word, and the distorted boundary between human agency/ divine grace, reaches its apotheosis, even if harmony is constantly frustrated by the encroaching incestuous language. There are moments in the drama when humans seem able to transcend religious processes and alleviate their suffering independently of God or narrative twists, but in due course it is a profound and theatrically realised rendering of (quasi-Protestant) an iconophobic godly grace that comes nearest to, though still short of, total restoration.

As a character of both desire and discharge, Marina becomes ominously linked with the regenerative energy of grace – ontologically, not just figuratively; she is a verbally astounding figure from her first appearance as her naming for the sea confirms the effectiveness of words to confer meaning. Languages collide in the bogus and insincere atmosphere of the brothel as the bawds find it hard to comprehend Marina's use of words – not belonging in this place she speaks a separate language:

BAWD:	How now, what's the matter?
BOLT:	Worse and worse, mistress. She has here spoken holy words to the Lord Lysimachus.
BAWD:	O, abominable!
BOLT:	She makes our profession as it were to stink before the face of the gods.
BAWD:	Marry, hang her up for ever! (IV.v.136-42)
MARINA:	Hark, hark you gods.
BAWD:	She conjures! (IV.v.150-1)

This scene began with the brief comic sight of the two gentlemen leaving the brothel after Marina's words transform their preferred evening's entertainment from whoring to listening

---

[418] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

to 'the vestals sing' – a memory of Thaisa's resolution to take on 'a vestal livery' (III.iv.9) and anticipating the 'music of the spheres' to come (V.i.217). Then, after doubtless losing significant takings (false signs, acquired by dishonest means) on account of their prized asset's integrity, Bawd urges Marina to go with their most valued customer, Lord Lysimachus, with language full of religio-sexual wordplay:

> BAWD: Pray you, without any more virginal fencing, will you use him he will line your apron with gold.
> MARINA: What he will do graciously, I will thankfully receive.
> LYSIMACHUS: Ha' you done?
> BAWD: My lord, she's not paced yet. You must take some pains to work her to your manage. – Come, we will leave his honour and her together. – Go thy ways.
>
> (IV.v.62-69)

It is Marina's words that convert the two gentlemen and Lysimachus, so that language overcomes their ignoble lust for her physical aura: 'I did not think / Thou couldst have spoken so well, ne'er dreamed thou couldst. / Had[419] I brought hither a corrupted mind / Thy speech has altered it' (IV.v.107-9). The play's varying languages are apparent in the relentless changes in the play's linguistic constitution: letters; swearing/ oaths (both sacred and profane); the neo-Arcadian language as Marina takes flowers to Lychorida's grave. Gower's choruses, as we have seen, also change according to their place and function within the drama.

To some degree this virtuosity moderates in the play's climactic recognition scene, to leave a simpler form of expression that aurally draws us in; yet the verbal timbre of this scene destabilizes the potential providential harmony by the impingement of a compulsive habit of metaphors and words alluding to incest, especially as spoken by Pericles. The more unaffected linguistic configuration of straightforward question and answer (almost like a catechism) discloses being and seeks out the wonderment of grace, with Marina's language most clearly aligning itself to her character and personality so that meaning and object are closely integrated, with strong theological associations, but the threat of incest consistently intrudes upon their reunion:

> MARINA: My name is Marina.   (V.i.133)
>
> PERICLES: And wherefore called Marina?
> MARINA: Called Marina,
>   For I was born at sea.
>   (V.i.146-7)
>
> PERICLES: O, come hither,
>   Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget
>   Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus,
>   And found at sea again!
>
>   (V.i.184-7)

---

[419] Lysimachus uses a hypothetical construction, but clearly he has come to the brothel for sexual favours: another of the play's deceptions.

'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget' suggests, and is a deliberately unsuccessful attempt to rectify and eliminate, the play's foundational incest so that the drama, through Marina, comes full circle and cannot leave behind its incestuous figurations. The destabilizing (and indecent) interrogation of history that the incest metaphor represents, endures. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation's belief in historical segregation and theological inheritance are pressured and appalled to disruption and become re-advocated as a substantiated temporal integration.

In religious terms, 'Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget' evokes 'the ancient paradox of Christianity, in which God the father becomes the son of his own daughter, a virgin',[420] a religiosity underscored and advanced by the resurrective imagery of the subsequent lines. The linear trajectory of time represented by the son's entry into history, is thus indemnified to the perpetuity and eternity of the father's divine grace. This grace materializes, or is observed, when astounding disclosure and linguistic declaration touch. When Gower talks of Marina 'sing[ing] like one immortal and … danc[ing] / As goddess-like'[421] (V.0.3-4) this is not to deify her in a idolatrous manner, but rather to show the potential for theatrical activities (singing, dancing) to communicate deep spiritual truths, much as nature's flora and fauna can contact with holiness (pantheism mixes with the play's polytheism and polychronicity).[422] This ability of Marina to suggest divinity through both words and physical conduct is what confers on her a 'goddess-like immortality'. The Marina that Shakespeare creates is herself a metaphor for the celestial capability of metaphoric language and action.

---

[420] Philip Edwards, 'An approach to the problem of *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare Survey* 5 (1952), pp. 25-49.

[421] All four of the tragicomic heroine-daughters are described in this way: Imogen 'undergoes, / More goddess-like than wife-like, such assaults' (*Cymbeline*, III.ii.7-8); Perdita is first seen 'Most goddess-like prank'd up' (*Winter's Tale*, IV.iv.10); Miranda is twice taken for a goddess: 'Most sure the goddess / On whom these airs attend' (*Tempest*, I.ii.420-1) and 'Is she the goddess that hath severed us, / And brought us thus together?' (*Tempest*, V.i.187-8)

[422] Gower goes on to state that Marina's 'nee'le composes / Nature's own shape of bud, bird, branch or berry, / That even her art sisters are the natural roses' (V.0.5-7).

CHAPTER FIVE

Aesthetic Eschatology and Political Theology in *The Winter's Tale*

The Winter's Tale's split into two generic categories condemns Antigonus (ursine assimilation) and Mamillius (indefinite demise) to tragic fates yet allows Leontes time and compass for a comedic regeneration of his moral course. His repentance is some sixteen years long, for the most part situated out of sight between acts three and four, so that when he returns in the fifth it is claimed by Cleomenes 'Sir, you have done enough, and have performed | A saint-like sorrow.' (V.i.1-2) Nonetheless, in the last act we see him continuing his penitent journey, and sometimes failing. Grace and redemption are continual processes. *The Winter's Tale* makes use of an active experimentation with theatrical form to exhibit this, so that a focus on character and interiority is augmented by questions of plot construction, narrative style and – specifically – how to translate the distended spatial and temporal axes of tragicomic romance into drama and religious debate.

It is in the later stages of the play that eschatological concerns and the divisive complications of early seventeenth-century religious politics come most clearly into play. However, the immediate context and theatrical inauguration of *The Winter's Tale* is Leontes' private suspicion of Hermione and Polixenes, and from this we can see how a variety of issues are at work relating to how we can come to know what to believe and whether this knowledge can be considered the 'truth' – questions that lie at the heart of both reformed and unreformed theologies. Indeed, these uncertainties and reservations, and an associated early modern quest for exactitude and assurance, form the wider background to the play. In *Othello*, the jealous husband demands 'ocular proof' (III.iii.363) of his wife's betrayal; Leontes is the opposite: he can under no circumstances be assured of his wife's loyalty, because he can never be definite – with visual, staged testimony or otherwise – that she wasn't disloyal.

Thinkers, be they scientists, philosophers or theologians (however intersected those job titles were in the medieval and early modern periods), had long concerned themselves with the interrelated questions of how one could be certain of knowing anything, how one could by inference know God, how far this knowledge could or should go, and the form it might take. As Stanley Cavell has shown,[423] Leontes' absolute refutation of actuality has a broader relevance to the common epistemological predicaments of the period. *The Winter's Tale* is divided very decidedly into two, however, and it is clear that Leontes' crippling misgivings and suspicions do not go beyond the third act, even if this does not mean a complete return to what is considered 'rational' thought: the play is perhaps 'primarily an invitation to explore the affective states created by various kinds of identifications.'[424] It is a romance that initially frustrates us as we (like the other characters) grow increasingly exasperated by Leontes' extreme and irrational behaviour and its tragic results; by the end, we partake in how the assorted characters variously react to the potential institutes of wonder and observe the play's suggestive interaction with a range of theological ideologies. Nevertheless, *The Winter's Tale* by no means offers solutions, only stimulations to the other investigations.

---

[423] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays by Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 197-8; 201-3.
[424] Charles Altieri, 'Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*: a cautionary account of epistemic criticism', in John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer & Luca Pocci, eds, *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 267.

Raphael Lyne has argued that, for the late tragicomic plays, 'a supernatural register is never far away, and often intervenes strongly. They are wondrous in two senses: first, they are improbable (and they make an issue of their patent fictionality); and second, they are miraculous in a more religious sense – they bring to mind the actions of gods, and of God.'[425] For Lyne their ironic manner is part of a movement away from religious faith. Certainly, these plays' elaborate intermingling of unconcealed fiction and wonder, far-reaching imagination and miracle, can make it troublesome to know what to believe; however, for a Jacobean audience it seems probable that the shades of meaning and astonishments of action within the works can be analogously connected to local, topical inscrutabilities of religious faith. If Pericles asks 'who to thank | Besides the gods, for this great miracle' (V.iii.58-9), Thaisa immediately replies that her benefactor Cerimon is the one 'through whom the gods have shown their power' (l.61), acting as a divine agent, or 'mortal officer' (l.63).

In *The Winter's Tale,* Hermione's image returns twice after her seeming demise: first as an apparition witnessed by Antigonus just before his own death; then as a statue, observed by all. Both events have important evocations for the way by which Shakespeare explores the Reformation's ramifications in this play. We will return to Antigonus presently, but when Perdita kneels before the statue in act five it calls to mind (at least for the original audience) older religious traditions as well as Protestant objections to these customs, especially the worship of idols – objects incorrectly given the adoration obliged to God and no-one else. Protestant theology instructed that genuflecting before idols or entreating them for miracles was popish idolatry, and that authentic understanding of the divine came from within not without. Yet Perdita rebukes those that would call her action 'superstition, that / I kneel and then implore her blessing' (V.iii.43-4), suggesting an understated remonstration to such containments.

Consequently, recent critics such as Phebe Jensen and Gillian Woods have powerfully argued for the play to be suitably regarded as immersed in wistfulness for the prohibited practices of the past. Jensen suggests that, '*The Winter's Tale* can be seen to insist that the power of theatrical, sculptural, and literary art is grounded in aesthetics of representation and transformation rooted in Romanist ritual.'[426] Woods properly asserts that *The Winter's Tale*, 'audaciously embraces the emotional reach of unreformed representation that in other plays serves to engage the audience in intellectual problems.'[427] As Michael O'Connell has persuasively argued, the play also seems to engage 'the audience in a moment that would seem to confirm the worst fears of the Puritan anti-theatricalists.'[428]

Many scholars from Northrop Frye and G. Wilson Knight, to more current writers such as Sean Benson[429] and Sarah Beckwith, have interpreted Hermione's resurrection in

---

[425] Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare's Late Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 3.

[426] Phebe Jensen, 'Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55:3 (2004), p. 306.

[427] Gillian Woods, Ch. 5, 'Knowing Fiction in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 169-208; quotation from p. 208.

[428] Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theatre in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 13. For more detail on the range and often surprising attitudes of the anti-theatricalists, see Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2015), Ch.1, 'Anti-theatricalism in Shakespeare's Age', pp. 30-78.

[429] Sean Benson, *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Raising the Dead* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies, 2009); 'The Resurrection of the Dead in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*', *Renascence* 61:1 (2008), pp. 3-24; Review of Adam Max Cohen, *Wonder in Shakespeare* (London: Palgrave, 2012), in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63:3 (2012), pp. 458-61.

sacramental terms, though they acknowledge the unreality of her coming to life. Beckwith argues that in 'Shakespeare's version of resurrection, it is the agencies of both art and religion, of religion working through the agencies of theatrical art, that have become essential.'[430] For Beckwith art alone cannot sustain genuine faith, and for O'Connell the statue scene epitomizes an incarnational aesthetic and commemorates 'the visual and physical elements of theatre'.[431] He suggests that the scene's contention to truth is assuaged by its self-consciousness, supplying a crucial opposite to Leontes' egotistical self-belief of the play's first half, where his fantastical manufacture of Hermione's betrayal is tragic.

Huston Diehl contends that Protestant aesthetics of wonder are exemplified through the scene, all together asking the audience to interrogate any unsuspecting leaning in the direction of idolatry in their reaction to the statue.[432] For Diehl, Hermione's resurrection provokes a 'Pauline' marvel in the natural order, represented by the living theatre and its actors' physical form, even if he disregards the apostle Paul's very clear theology of grace over nature. Indeed, Hermione's resurrection is a shared and aesthetic action, far from Paul's personal experiences.

As we will see, a more viable context is Perdita's discussion with Polixenes over art and nature, where the former is decontaminated from the posturing self-importance of both nature and the more extreme religious ideologies, forming a unity akin to James I's aesthetic and ecumenical policies. The titillating and taboo element to the statue (it is curtained off, as effigies were in Roman Catholic churches; it is sculpted by Giulio Romano, an artist linked to papal politics and pornography in Rome) mirrors and advances the intoxicating, forbidden world of the Elizabethan/ Jacobean theatre. But the statue scene emerges as an ostensible *volte-face* to the disparaging evaluation of idolatry in the play's first half, and in one sense, it is. Yet in a more intense way, this scene is in point of fact a consistent progression of Shakespearean iconoclasm, a dialectical expansion that explodes its own ideology. By challenging idolatry at its source, the play endeavours to make the theatre secure for art again – protected from condemnation by demystifying its supernatural connections (even if no likely paradigm for this is imparted).

In *The Winter's Tale*, idolatry becomes fundamentally a function of the audience's imagination, rather than *physical* forms (actors) in a *public* space (the theatre). These problematizing characteristics of humanity (a shared, bodily, existence) create angst and tension, and are to an extent mitigated and improved by language and art, by facilitating innovative varieties of comparatively ritualized social order and communication. The antipathy towards the allied hierarchies of church and state find expression in the varieties of religio-political extremism, anti-theatricalism, and the theatre itself. As we will see, far from being a Greenblattian secular stage, the early modern theatre was a fulcrum for reinstating humanity's relationship with both the divine and itself.

---

[430] Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 138.

[431] O'Connell, *Idolatrous*, p. 13.

[432] Huston Diehl, '"Strike all that look upon with marvel": Theatrical and Theological Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*', in Bryan Reynolds and William N. Nest, eds, *Rematerializing Shakespeare: Authority and Representation on the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 19-34.

Aesthetic Eschatology

Following the several opening scenes of suspicion, alienation and expulsion, the third act climaxes with Antigonus's vision of Hermione, his absquatulating and subsequent mauling at the paws and jaws of the notorious bear.[433] Genres such as tragedy and tragicomedy that portrayed or warned of ferocious and/ or unexpected death were necessarily alert to the immediate religious connotations their dramas presented (though, of course, *any* staged death has some soteriological inferences, as we shall see). More than simply a plot twist, for an early seventeenth century audience such scenarios captured the theological and eschatological anxieties of the age, and drama's inherent ability to affirm and deny its own meanings meant that a discussion of often heterodox views could be readily exploited by playwrights.

Despite the best efforts of reformed doctrines and multifarious authorities, significant quantities of the population could not be persuaded to renounce the prospect that the dead prevailed post-mortem as ghosts, living on in a purgatorial intermediary; throughout society such beliefs persisted, and playwrights enhanced and made use of them. Shakespeare's ghosts in *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are spectral avengers, simultaneously real and unreal, frantic to maintain a role in the plays they have departed.[434] Then, in the two tragicomedies he wrote just before *The Winter's Tale – Pericles* and *Cymbeline –* Shakespeare has the heroines Thaisa and Imogen endure death by only outwardly seeming to have expired, before they reawaken.[435] In *The Winter's Tale*, these two strands – ghosts and women that will not die – are joined in the figure of Hermione. She faints at III.ii.144 after hearing of her son's death, and is borne off as Paulina says 'she's dead' (l.200). In the next scene Antigonus, addressing the babe Perdita, diegetically informs us of a poignant apparition he has experienced:

> I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o'th'dead
> May walk again. If such a thing be, thy mother
> Appeared to me last night, for ne'er was dream
> So like waking. To me comes a creature,
> Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
> I never saw a vessel of like sorrow
> So filled and so becoming. In pure white robes
> Like very sanctity, she did approach
> My cabin where I lay …   (III.iii.15-23)

The apparition tells Antigonus to take Perdita to Bohemia, and portends that as punishment for his participation in the whole affair, he will not see his wife again. Antigonus is understandably unsure as to whether it was a waking or dreaming vision: a scepticism that, like Horatio in *Hamlet* (I.i.23-5), connects him to a Protestant tradition, according to which ghosts, if they existed at all, were hallucinations created by the devil; the Catholic position, of course, looked upon walking spirits as souls enduring purgatorial trials, having not fully expiated their earthly sins (cf. *Hamlet*, I.v.10-13). When he has quoted Hermione/ the vision's

---

[433] After Antigonus' swift *Exit*, the Shepherd and Clown enter to complete the scene, indicating the beginning of the comedy, the pastoral and 'things newborn' (III.iii.111).
[434] Though Old Hamlet, of course, departs just prior to the action of the play getting under way.
[435] Juliet and Desdemona also appear to breathe their last, only to revive.

speech (ll.26-35), Antigonus forsakes his sceptical stance, and (at any rate, for a short time) believes as a 'Catholic', 'yet for this once, yea superstitiously' (l.39). Antigonus, in this short speech, discloses some of the shifting, complex and confusing eclecticism of early modern religion.

James Edward Siemon draws attention to the fact that Shakespearean ghosts who emerge in dreams and dream-like states, are each time those of the dead (the princes *et al.* in *Richard III*; Caesar in *Julius Caesar*; Banquo in *Macbeth*).[436] Nonetheless, as Deborah Curren-Aquino points out, 'the phenomenon of walking spirits of the living – what in modern parapsychology is called bilocation – would not have been unknown in the seventeenth century'.[437] Stephen Orgel cites Walton's *Life of Donne*, where we discover 'how in Paris in 1612 the poet was visited by the spirit of his wife, who was alive in London at the time.'[438] Moreover, early hagiography in Catholicism abounds with stories of saintly presences in more than one place, even while they were still living.

Yet, even if we assume Paulina to have merely given Hermione a place to hide, and that she didn't die, what then do we make of Antigonus' reported dream. Is it perhaps a psychological invention of his culpability, or a device of divine providence, both protecting Perdita and announcing Antigonus' demise? Indubitably it remains these, whatever the 'truth' of Hermione's corporal condition: Hermione exists in the literary form of romance/ tragicomedy, where contradictions flourish, so that in truth we can see Hermione's appearances as confirming that she both is and is not dead; she is actual fleshly woman and insubstantial spectre and statue. Moreover, it is misleading to press to a dead/ alive solution: Shakespearean drama, especially in the late plays, does not construct a consistent world; more accurately, it persistently amends or fine-tunes its version of reality in a manner corresponding or conforming to the burden of its progressing argument/ dramatic situation. Action can be subsequently misrepresented in order to satisfy developing conditions.

The apparition is nevertheless dramatically both existent and essential, for it *implies* (if nothing else) that Hermione has died, and Antigonus' experience with it prefigures Hermione's second reappearance, as the statue, where our faith, reality, and illusion will be challenged even further. The apparition deepens the link between Leontes and Antigonus, so that the latter's death can be profitably compared (theologically or otherwise) to the former's survival and restoration.

Alison Shell rightly identifies a Calvinist arrangement to this tragicomedy, where some are saved and others vanished, in ostensibly arbitrary fashion.[439] Yet, as she also says, *The Winter's Tale* is typical of not just Shakespearean drama, but the English Renaissance drama generally, in taking advantage of the comparative creative liberty of the theatre to create 'heterocosms or micro-climates',[440] miniature and eclectic areas of an assortment of religious ideologies, both within and without Christianity. As Peter Lake has written: 'the religious scene of Elizabeth's reign is best seen as a number of attempts, conducted at very different levels of self-consciousness and coherence, at creative bricolage, mixing and matching, as a

---

[436] James Edward Siemon, '"But It Appears She Lives": Iteration in *The Winter's Tale*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 89 (1974), p. 12.

[437] Deborah T. Curren-Aquino & Susan Snyder, eds, *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 156n.

[438] Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 34.

[439] Shell, *Religion*, pp. 203-215.

[440] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

variety of cases and pitches were made for popular support.'[441] Gillian Woods has argued that there is a typically Shakespearean eclecticism at work so that Antigonus' plot, 'is structured by competing paradigms: Catholicism, Calvinism, classicism and nature. The hybridity of the play is not only generic.'[442] As we shall see, this dual nature will have implications for the play's conclusive undertakings, the proliferation of a multitude of rival ideologies confirming its reality in early seventeenth-century England, and makes it 'more difficult to dismiss as ideological fiction the role superstitious interpretation plays in the dramaturgy.'[443]

To comprehend more fully Antigonus's predicament and placement in the drama we must divert briefly to Leontes' own deliverance. Leontes' redemption is not based on rational judgement or surety but rather the 'awakening of his faith'. The initial accusation of his wife was not based on logic; neither can his restoration be. Leontes does not overcome his delusions by a 'return to rationality',[444] as Stephen Orgel has put it, but by appealing to the heavens, and seeing his son's death as godly chastisement for deficient trust in his marriage partner.[445]

Leontes' deliverance, then, might be based on the particularly – if not exclusively – 'Protestant' concepts of faith and grace, the latter a benevolently bestowed gift from God, the former necessitated by the polemically charged context of the post-Reformation period. It is confrontational, stimulating and at the same time appeasing: on the one hand Paulina's requirement to faith is called for in front of the statue (an appeal to the sacred effectiveness of idols); on the other, it substantiates a position on the comprehensive requisite of faith alone. Crucially, Shakespeare is here hardly offering a simplistic propaganda of virtuous Protestantism; indeed, there is perhaps a tinge of gentle parody to contemporary Protestant claims on select (exclusive, elected) grace and faith.

The free gift of grace facilitates Leontes' recovery in part because, like Posthumus in *Cymbeline*, he remains to some degree unapologetic and unchanged in his actions, and undeserving of Hermione's love: his reformation (and the play's broader potential significances) is perhaps best seen as a 'work in progress'.[446] Grace, especially for the reformed churches, is something that no one warrants, whether reprobate or respected. There is also an element here of Shakespeare refusing to exemplarize his characters, opposing any enticement to generate a piously universal significance and edifying didacticism.

We will shortly return to Antigonus and his fate, but before doing so we should also recognise that the world of *The Winter's Tale* is not a straightforwardly Christian one, but includes a spectrum of competing or ambiguous perspectives, not least because religious material with a direct contemporary relevance was likely to be too contentious to stage. A more subtle (and arguably more aesthetically rewarding) way to probe the issues involved was to make the most of other or indefinite cultures and faiths, their similarities or differences highlighting the more familiar.

---

[441] Peter Lake, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', Part Three, Chapter Five, in David Scott Kastan, ed., *A Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 79.

[442] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 173.

[443] *Ibid*., p. 173.

[444] Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 32.

[445] We must here avoid the modern tendency to see religion as a form of delusion and secularism as its rational counterpart.

[446] The term is Deborah T. Curren-Aquino's; ed. with Susan Snyder, *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 60. For example, Leontes yells somewhat contemptuously at Paulina at V.i.17-18, and cold-heartedly responds to her lament for her lost husband with the demand 'O Peace, Paulina!' (V.iii.135).

John Fletcher's tragicomedy *The Island Princess* (c.1619-21) is set on warring Indonesian islands and ostensibly stages the encounter between Islam and Christianity. Yet what can go unnoticed in this play for a modern audience is the hidden, intermittent correlation between Fletcher's Muslims and Jacobean Catholics: their language is progressively more inclined towards Catholic imagery. The titular princess's lady-in-waiting Panura conflates the language of different faiths when she uses an unreformed, Catholic oath when crying out of the Governor, 'By'r Lady, a sharp prophet!'[447] The abrupt shift between Catholic and Islamic registers is harder for modern ears to take in, but which a predominantly Protestant Jacobean audience 'would see as a connection between what it believed to be two non-reformed heresies.'[448] Post-Reformation popular representation of the Islamic faith played on the perceived connections between Christian and non-Christian error, and as Daniel Vitkus has shown, the connection between Islam and Catholicism as the twin enemies of Protestantism is a 'commonplace feature of Protestant historiography',[449] often with misconceived notions of their idolatrous behaviour. Like Fletcher's Muslims, William Percy's little known *Mahomet and his Heaven* (c.1601) has followers of Islam swear by Catholic saints ('Sancto Domino' and St. Anne). Though *The Winter's Tale* and the other late plays do not go this far away in their employment of pagan or non-Christian settings, it remains the same essential device: contemplative spectators, either during or after the performance, could scarcely have passed up comparing the perspectives presented onstage with their Christian conventions outside. The period was one of continuing exploration and discovery, and with London being a centre of world trade and travel, non-Christian narratives were becoming increasingly familiar and were continually being compared and contrasted to the Christian framework for edification and instruction.

If it is therefore straightforward to see Leontes as being redeemed after a Christian understanding of repentance and faith, how do we interpret the savaging of Antigonus on the Bohemian coast? There is a complex and multi-layered function to his demise, and a connection to Leontes' moral journey, establishing it as the play's dramatic pivot. It is also a significant indicator of the interplay of rival doctrines that allow such a density of meanings: Antigonus may disappear at III.iii.57 but he is remembered at the end of the play, Paulina reminding us of the loss of her 'mate, that's never to be found again' (V.iii.134). Leontes' response (which begins the play's final speech) is at best uninterested, at worst callous: 'O peace, Paulina!' (l.135) His offer of Camillo as a calming replacement is hardly sufficient, and merely confirms the belligerent nature of his regime and personality. On a soteriological/ theological level, however, a contemporary audience is sure to have been alert to the need to recollect and consider Antigonus' destiny, for it is this remembrance that gives it significance beyond the functional role of dividing the play into a domestic tragedy of jealousy and pastoral comedy of restoration.

Antigonus, it seems, could have acted differently – that is, he acted according to his own free will – but was pressured into doing so by his monarch, and suffered as a consequence. Hermione's apparition, recognizes the 'ungentle business / Put on thee by my lord' (III.iii.33-34) so that Antigonus' guilt is in part subject to Leontes' commands (though perhaps Camillo's own shrewd dodge of these orders is rewarded by his taking Antigonus'

---

[447] IV.ii.134. John Fletcher, *The Island Princess*, ed. Clare McManus (London: Bloomsbury Arden Early Modern Drama, 2013).

[448] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[449] Daniel Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: "Selimus, Emperor of the Turks", "A Christian Turned Turk", and "The Renegado"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 8.

place by Paulina's side). Proceeding 'against his better disposition' (l.27), Antigonus intentionally believes superstitiously, though acknowledging he has a choice over whether to believe Hermione's apparition or not. His actions are erratic and frequently inconsistent – but given he believed himself 'most accursed' (l.51) they are dramatically and psychologically credible. The fatalistic element to Antigonus is endorsed by the mariners' belief that they have invited the divine disapproval: 'The heavens with that we have in hand are angry / And frown upon 's' (l.5-6) – to which Antigonus replies 'Their sacred wills be done!' (l.7)

If Antigonus *is* divinely cursed, then so too are all the mariners that perish on account of his undertaking for Leontes (and, indeed, 'all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost').[450] It is clear that Antigonus is acting principally under orders from his king, and is in part punished for his compliance and conformity; but there is also a feeling that greater powers are at work, too. It intimates a requirement for repentance ('there weep', l.31), and condemns sovereign tyranny, anticipating the restitution of the king to come. That Antigonus dies, and Leontes lives, if excessive or unjust to modern sensibilities, would to the early seventeenth-century mind, be seen as proof that 'agents of a sinful action risked being cut off by the hand of God. Antigonus' wrongdoing is contingent on Leontes', and something for which Leontes, as king is ultimately responsible; yet he is not just a whipping-boy.'[451] What, then, of Antigonus' actual death?

Shakespeare's (in)famous stage direction ('Exit, pursued by a bear') hints at more than ursine polyphagia[452] for Sicilian lords (could Antigonus not have conveniently perished at sea with the mariners?). It was a Shakespearean adjunct to his source, Greene's *Pandosto*; moreover, the bear was routinely cut from earlier performances, perhaps regarded as unfit for the 'serious' theatre. Bell's 1774 acting text removed all reference to it, Francis Gentleman glossing, 'Shakespeare had here introduced a bear – a most fit actor for pantomimes or puppet-shows; but blushing criticism has excluded the rough gentleman.'[453] Today, however, the creature and its role in the drama are given more critical prominence, and the bear can in fact be seen as an emblematic conveyor of many of the play's multiple meanings: the playwright's choice of animal transmits a certain stress of generic, symbolic, anthropological, astrological, and theological import.

*

The Winter's Tale is, as we have seen, a tragicomedy, with the first three acts an intense psychological drama,[454] followed by two acts of pastoral comedy. *The Winter's Tale* swerves from tragedy into comedy, managed by the intercession of time and through a range of shifting registers here in the middle of the play. The first three acts are a condensed tragedy, with the genre's climactic anagnorisis and peripeteia in operation: Leontes continues stubbornly in belief of Hermione's infidelity, even defying the oracle, until news of her and

---

[450] The Third Gentleman at V.ii.60-1.

[451] Shell, *Religion*, p. 207.

[452] Or is it anthropophobia? The bear after all chases Antigonus because it is chased itself. As Jonathan Bate has said: 'the hunted becomes the hunter, inverting the Actaeon story where the hunter becomes the hunted.' Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 224.

[453] Cited in: Deborah T. Curren-Aquino & Susan Snyder, eds, *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 30-1.

[454] Concluded, as John Pitcher has pointed out, in 'neat Aristotelian terms, with death and recognition when the husband at last realises that his wife and son have died because of his jealousy.' (Pitcher, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, p. 17).

his son's death brings a change and his status as a tragic patriarch like Lear is confirmed with his recognition and reversal. Yet this compacted drama is too quick – like Leontes' suspicion detonating from nowhere it is 'too hot, too hot' (I.ii.139) – and the play prompts us to ask what happens next, what ensues what you've royally miscarried but unlike Lear you don't die in (at least) edifying acknowledgement of wrongdoing or, like Othello, majestically 'upon a kiss'.[455] Here from the fast-tracked trauma a potentially even more optimistic structure tendering a second chance is opened up.

> Prithee, bring me
> To the dead bodies of my queen and son.
> One grave shall be for both. Upon them shall
> The causes of their death appear, unto
> Our shame perpetual. Once a day I'll visit
> The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
> Shall be my recreation. So long as nature
> Will bear up with this exercise, so long
> I daily vow to use it. Come, and lead me
> To these sorrows.   (III.ii.231-240)

'Tears shed there / Shall be my recreation'. There is an irony to Leontes' use of 'recreation' as a diversion or pastime, since there can be no pleasure in his spirit's penitent activity, but there are also the underlying original senses of 'restoration' from the Latin *recreare* ('create again, renew'), insinuating what is to come – the word encompasses conspicuously within it 're-creation'.

In an elegantly shaped account that seems to foreshadow the later plays, a gentleman in *King Lear* diegetically speaks of Cordelia's weeping when reading the letters telling of her sisters' maltreatment of their father:

> KENT: Did your letters pierce [Cordelia] to any demonstration
>   of grief?
> GENTLEMAN: Ay, sir. She took them, read them in my presence,
>   And now and then an ample tear trilled down
>   Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen
>   Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,
>   Sought to be king o'er her.
> KENT: O, then, it moved her?
> GENTLEMAN: Not to a rage; patience and sorrow strove
>   Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
>   Sunshine and rain at once, her smiles and tears
>   Were like a better way. Those happy smilets
>   That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know
>   What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence
>   As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,
>   Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved
>   If all could so become it.

---

[455] *Othello*, V.ii.357.

'Women's weapons, water-drops' (*Lear*, II.ii.466) have become 'pearls from diamonds'. In a play where the eyes and seeing/ not seeing (literally and figuratively) is so significant, these lines have an intensely poignant resonance. The gentleman's ornate description romanticizes Cordelia, making her an emblem of kindness and compassion, hinting perhaps at a *pietà* and prefiguring the tragicomedy heroines. 'Tears shed … / Shall be my recreation': the capacity for tears to be ordnances of destruction and manipulation transforms in *Lear* and *The Winter's Tale* to reveal their power as regenerative, purgative hydrotherapy. It is here that the latter play begins to shift – in place, tone, genre and time – with tragedy grappling towards comedy.

Following Leontes' withdrawal into contrition, we significantly have the play's first scene (III.iii) wholly of Shakespeare's invention: Antigonus takes Perdita to the shore; is chased off and killed; *at once* the Shepherd enters to find Perdita; the Clown then arrives to tell how the ship sank in a storm and that the bear has just eaten Antigonus ('I have not winked since I saw these sights').[456] Pope had argued for a scene change at line 58, when the Shepherd arrives, on the neoclassical principle that the stage had been emptied at line 57. However, this disturbs the continuity of action and the buffoonery that ensues, which draws on our troubled feelings from the jolt of the bear's very recent appearance. Antigonus and the sailor's deaths are lampooned (especially at III.iii.86-99), and the play shifts in register, leading us to the Shepherd's decisive line that fastens the genres together:

Now bless thyself; thou met'st with things dying, I with things newborn.

The play makes absolutely clear the change in generic direction as the themes of rebirth and restoration are overtly proclaimed. The storm is significant. For Evanthius,[457] in comedy 'the beginning is turbulent, the end tranquil, while in tragedy the opposite holds true. Tragedy depicts life as something to be fled, comedy, as something to be seized.'[458] 'Turbulent' in the original Latin ('*turbulenta*') carries meanings of storm and tempest; 'life as something to be fled' ('*fugienda vita*') can also denote deeper senses of both dying and the transience of existence. Thus, the tragic part of *The Winter's Tale* (Acts I–III) opens with the brotherly friendship of the homosocial and fraternal princes (perhaps, as we shall see, representing a previously united Christendom), before descending into more and more disturbance and death, until Act III when a storm ('*turbulenta*') forces Antigonus to flee the bear ('*fugienda*'), thus heralding the beginning of the comedic element, and the attendant reunions and nuptials.[459]

The bear helps complete this transition and point to its implications, beyond the dramatic functionality of preventing Antigonus getting home and divulging where he abandoned Perdita. In part, it is a Shakespearean sideswipe at those privileging high over low art: Horace saw popular drama as little better than baiting animals, with beasts – he

---

[456] III.iii.101-2.
[457] A grammarian from late antiquity, often printed in Terence's comedies studied by Elizabethans at school.
[458] Robert S. Miola, 'New Comedy in *King Lear*', in *Philological Quarterly* 73 (1994), p. 329.
[459] The other tragicomedies have correspondingly poor weather.

complained – often coming on stage regardless of plot, just to keep the rabble content.[460] The bear connects the apparently irreconcilable genres and leisurely preferences. Moreover, it is both funny *and* horrifying, unstageable *and* the most celebrated of Shakespearean stage directions. Louise Clubb has maintained that a bear would also be traditionally seen as a creature born shapeless and licked into form, both more and less horrendous (wild but tameable) than other animals. Thus, in the generically transitional scene, it becomes 'the tragicomic beast par excellence', guaranteeing 'the tempering of pain or laughter'.[461] It is, in Nevill Coghill's phrase, the 'dramaturgical hinge' of the play;[462] Antigonus' savaging by the bear is an end that has to be both potentially preposterous *and* potentially profound.

Deep cultural and philosophical meanings lurk behind the ursine interloper. Contemporary writers – such as Edward Topsell in his 1607 chronicle of the quadruped kingdom, *The History of Foure-Footed Beasts* – saw the bear as a powerful symbol of a fierce and ruthless authority; Barbara Ravelhofer has recently seen the feral creature preying on a courtier as characterizing the disturbed and depraved sovereign who had mistreated his court.[463] Certainly it is possible to identify an association between Leontes and the bear: Maurice Hunt gathers copious examples[464] of wordplay on 'bear' to call attention to the churlishly 'bearish' Leontes of Acts I–III, who in 'devour[-ing his surrogate] Antigonus',[465] wipes out the transgressions he had let loose within himself, by this means initiating the happy conclusion to come. Recent productions have gone further by having a clawing, stalking Leontes, sometimes wearing a bearskin coat.[466]

The bear's presence is typically accredited to the popularity of such episodes in contemporary drama: the romance *Mucedorus* (1610) had a clown tumbling over a bear; Jonson's *Oberon, the Faery Prince* (1611; printed 1616), which might also be the basis of the satyr dance in act four, incorporated a chariot pulled by a pair of white bears. Shakespeare's bear, however, is different. Gillian Woods identifies *Mucedorus*'s bear as 'facilitating a fantastical, Sidnean plot in which the disguised prince Mucedorus gets to prove his bravery … Shakespeare's bear [shows] proper fictional respect in leaving Perdita unharmed, but Antigonus's grisly death … is an all too real affirmation of natural mortality.'[467] This, as Woods asserts, helps confirm a drama that is knowingly fictional: *The Winter's Tale.* This, as we will see, has significant implications for the complex, bifurcated world the place inhabits, caught between tragedy and comedy, fiction and reality, court and country, Protestant and Catholic.

In the context of European folklore the bear suggests the 'carnivalesqe' or 'Candlemas' bear, signalling the end of the Christmas holiday season and the start of the agricultural year; thus, it becomes a 'significant marker of spatiotemporal form' as a 'figure of boundaries and transformations'.[468] However, as Jonathan Bate points out, 'the Mariner has begun the scene

[460] Dale B.J. Randall, '"This is the chase": or, further pursuit of Shakespeare's bear', *Shakespeare Journal* 121 (1985), pp. 89-95.

[461] Louise G. Clubb, 'The Tragicomic Bear', *Comparative Literature Studies* 9 (1972), pp. 17-30.

[462] Nevill Coghill, 'Six Points of Stage-Craft in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958), p. 35.

[463] Barbara Ravelhofer, '"Beasts of Recreacion": Henslowe's White Bears', *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002), pp. 287-323.

[464] Such as I.ii.155-6 and II.iii.90-2.

[465] Maurice Hunt, '"Bearing Hence": Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature* 44.2 (2004), p. 335.

[466] Cf. Michael Bogdanov's 1990 English Shakespeare Company production and Brian Kulick's 2000 New York Shakespeare Festival.

[467] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 173.

[468] Michael D. Bristol, 'In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economics in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), p. 159, 161.

[III.iii] by interpreting the storm (and therefore by implication the bear) in the same way that Leontes interpreted Mamillius' death':[469]

> In my conscience,
> The heavens with that we have in hand are angry,
> And frown upon's.
>
> (III.iii.4-6)

Leontes ignores the physiological explanations, and realises the lack of faith in his wife has lead to divine punishment. Bate[470] also interprets the bear in Ovidian terms: Callisto, one of Diana's virgin huntresses, is raped and made pregnant by Jove and after 'Nine times the Moone full'[471] is discovered by Diana and expelled; she gives birth to a son; Juno avenges her husband's betrayal by punishing the victim: Callisto is metamorphosed into a bear; hunter becomes hunted:

> How oft, O, did she in the hills the barking hounds beguile
> And in the lawns, where she herself had chased erst her game,
> Now fly herself to save her life when hunters sought the same!
> Full oft at sight of other beasts she hid her head for fear,
> Forgetting what she was herself.[472]

Fifteen years later, Callisto's son – Arcas/ Arcadia – is out hunting and stumbles upon his bear-mother; they both freeze in terror and recognition, and are at once swept by Jove into the firmament in the form of the 'neighbouring stars about the pole on high',[473] the Great and Little Bears. A second, liberating, metamorphosis into perpetuity. Polixenes' first words in *The Winter's Tale* seem to resonate with the revelation of the pregnancy in Callisto's story:

> Nine changes of the wat'ry star[474] hath been
> The Shepherd's note since we have left our throne
> Without a burden.
> (I.ii.1-3)

Nine cycles of the moon signify pregnancy, and it even makes Leontes' accusation seem ironically possible, whilst 'burden' further plays on the idea of 'borne in the womb'. As with his early image of the 'twinned lambs that did frisk i'the'sun' (I.ii.66), Polixenes is established as associated with the pastoral idyll to come, so that if Perdita may not be a Bohemian bastard-child, she at least has a surrogate Bohemian father.

---

[469] Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 223-4.

[470] Bate, *Ovid*, pp. 224-7. Cf. Patricia Parker, 'Sound Government, Polymorphic Bears: *The Winter's Tale* and Other Metamorphoses of Eye and Ear', in *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson, eds., (John Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 187-9.

[471] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding (1567), ed. Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 77.

[472] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[473] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[474] The moon is 'wat'ry' because it presides over the tides. Cf. *Hamlet* I.i.118-9: 'And the moist star | Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands'; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II.i.103: 'Therefore the moon, the governess of floods'.

Even if one does not wish to strongly identify the bear with Callisto/ Hermione, it still brings, to those familiar with Ovid, a narrative characterized by a damaging sexuality, the ill-treatment of a blameless woman, unjust allegations, suspicion, distrust and revenge. More than this, however, is the idea of things being more than they seem; the very kind of error Leontes makes. So bears may 'appear to be savage beasts, but they may be victims too.'[475] *The Winter's Tale*'s bear is first hunted, then (in his stage direction) hunter.

In *The Winter's Tale* we can see an indication that bears (like storms) can be the way God/ the gods quarrel with each other and intervene in human affairs: Dennis Biggins, and more recently Alison Shell, have seen the bear as 'an emblem of divine retribution',[476] related to transgression and supernatural punishment.[477] Perhaps Antigonus's fate echoes those who unwisely derided the prophet Elisha and were consumed by bears (2 Kings 2:24).[478] Surely, given that seamen used the constellations *Ursa Major* and *Ursa Minor* to guide their ships, and that 'steering a ship was a very common metaphor for life, one could also interpret it as an astrological figuration both of Antigonus's destiny, and of the Mariner's with his crew.'[479] The bear, and shortly Time, seek to smooth over the play's generic and chronological disjunctures – and in the theatre the part of the bear is frequently[480] doubled[481] with the figure of Time ('I that please some, try all; both joy and terror | Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error'[482]), so that 'Exit, pursued by a bear' morphs into 'Exit, summoned by Time', who appears 'like a Jacobean policeman'.[483]

The Winter's Tale's oracle is intended to be accepted as true, though no gods in point of fact emerge, as in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. Like those two plays, however, there is a *deus ex machina*-type at work here, as Alison Shell has pointed out, in the form of Paulina. She speaks prophetically to Antigonus even before the oracle has spoken, warning him of consequences should he carry out Leontes' commands:

---

[475] Bate, *Ovid*, p. 227.

[476] Dennis Biggins, '"Exit pursued by a Beare": A Problem in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23 (1962), p. 13.

[477] For all that we can see the bear as representing the gods' involvements and control over human affairs, in the theatre the part would still either be played by an actor in a bear costume (i.e., a comic metamorphosis) or by a real tame bear – both signifiers of man's mastery over nature through art: 'Myth ultimately says something about human powerlessness – the archetypal pattern will repeat itself *ad infinitum* – whereas the artistry of the actor and trainer says something about human power… As when Paulina's agency replaces that of the gods, so with the bear Shakespeare replaces Ovid's *species aeternitatis* with *species humanitatis*.' Bate, *Ovid*, p. 227. For a discussion of how the bear has been played, see: Snyder & Curren-Aquino, eds, *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: New Cambridge Shakespeare, 2007), pp. 30-33.

[478] Cf. Roy Battenhouse, ed., *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension: An Anthology of Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 233-4.

[479] Shell, *Religion*, p. 210. *The Odyssey* notes that *Ursa Major* is the only constellation that never sinks below the horizon and 'bathes in the Ocean's waves', so it is used as a celestial reference point for maritime navigation. Cf. Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 5.

[480] For example, in the John Barton and Trevor Nunn production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 1976.

[481] One of a number of suggestive connections through multiplying roles that the play can make. Others might see Hermione return as Perdita or Leontes take on one of the Bohemian parts.

[482] IV.i.1-2.

[483] Robert W. Speaight, 'Shakespeare in Britain', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977), p. 189.

<div align="center">For ever</div>

Unvenerable be thy hands if thou
Tak'st up the princess by that forced baseness
Which he has put upon't.

<div align="right">(II.ii.75-78)</div>

Antigonus' death is sudden and violent – a 'bad death' – and if for medieval Catholicism a 'good death' was a sign of salvation, it persisted as a notion with the Protestant faith, too. Similarly, both Catholic and Protestant strains would have linked bad deaths to God's wrath and punishment. Catholics would also maintain the apparatus of purgatory to offset the manner of one's death; Protestants stressed divine grace and mystery as a palliative to the often random nature of human demise. Despite this often ambiguous variation, it is also possible to see all Christians arguing for the importance of charitable judgement, and the need to assess the totality of one's life, not simply the moment of one's passing.

If Antigonus could describe Hermione's apparition as both sent from the classical god Apollo and as a residually Catholic spirit, there is also a resonance of Calvinist predestination to his fate, where some are saved, some lost. Yet, this very eclecticism surely argues against an impression that Antigonus is certain to be damned: there is room for argument, dialogue and possibility, and Shakespeare does not create a didactic theology. He raises and discusses the issues at the level of individuals. The play has a determining accent on Christian notions of repentance and redemption, but the setting is non-Christian, and Christ as redeemer is never mentioned. The 'faith' that is required of Leontes, and for the play to end joyfully, is (explicitly) *not* faith in Christ (which all Christians of whatever denomination would have deemed indispensable to salvation), but a more ambiguous, equivocal faith in (perhaps) Paulina, his wife, himself, as well as the prospect of an external divine agency. Eschatologically, *The Winter's Tale* preserves an awareness of judgement, but insists upon a limited divine penalty, not perpetual perdition.[484] Leontes and Antigonus are both finitely penalized, though only Antigonus' sentence is decisive: a cautionary petition for remorse and contrition.

By managing these awkward subjects of salvation aesthetically, *The Winter's Tale* is able to show how each and every early-modern Christian, regardless of their denominational beliefs, had to acknowledge that it was an element of the divine arrangement for a few to be given no assistance from God's grace. Both Protestant and Catholic varieties would have concurred that sinners were damned, but the details and justifications of such damnation were beyond the scope of conventional Christian theology. The drama's dissenting and challenging interrogations are intentional and are assuredly there to create some impression of discrimination and injustice to Antigonus' lot, which ensures he is long borne in mind, by the cast and audience alike. Antigonus is not forgotten and the reminder of his fate at the play's end should not be overlooked. Reacting to and discussing the contemporary theological implications of Antigonus' plight, *The Winter's Tale* brings together both an orthodox delight at exceptional grace, and a more precarious heterodoxy at the unpredictability of that grace.

---

[484] Writing on the Scottish Play, Robert Hunter remarks, '*Macbeth* should be apprehended simultaneously as the providential tragicomedy of a society and as the psychological tragedy of a villain protagonist … what the play shows us is that, experienced from within, by its victim and instrument, the providential pattern signifies nothing.' Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgements* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 182.

Leontes' own receipt of grace *is* discriminatory: it is atypical and remarkable since grace could not be expected, or guaranteed, but was a divine bequest. The conferral of clemency to one wrongdoer, and the apparent denial of it to another, perhaps more blameless soul, is theologically demanding and theatrically affecting, more than ever at a time when the processes of godly mercy were so vehemently contested. These heated theological discussions might never have made it into fully integrated studies or within church sermons, but they animated the general interest, and, as Alison Shell has argued, if the minutiae between, for example, supralapsarian and sublapsarian Calvinist attitudes to the predestined soul were steered clear by the clerics, 'it might positively have invited playwrights to fill the gap',[485] writing in response to and deliberating this enthusiasm for issues of shame, penance and deliverance. Posthumus's expiation is granted significant space in *Cymbeline*'s last act in a way unusual for Shakespeare; but Leontes' repentance, and the apparatus of its enacting, are centred structurally into the play's entire architecture and generic form: 'the early-seventeenth-century English fashion for tragicomedy has a symbiotic relationship with contemporary theological debate on these topics.'[486]

The play is ultimately nonaligned on the doctrinal matters – or rather, it sanctions the prospect of both: sin can be expected to be reprimanded; one's fate can also be redeemed through the instrument of extraordinary grace. Antigonus is more than simply a wrongdoer punished: he is Leontes' subject, servant and shadow so that the king's moral preservation and progress is *The Winter's Tale*'s ethical axis. Antigonus experiences death for the desertion of Perdita; Leontes receives severe lessons but is restored to his wife and child and stays the crux of the play's moral cosmos. Part of this centrality is Leontes' status as king, and therefore uppermost in the social, political and (in England) religious hierarchy of the time. The importance of Perdita's return that restores to him (and his realm) the vital heir his foolish behaviour has destroyed should therefore not be underestimated in the context of the play's origins. What, then, is the wider socio-political significance of the rest of the play, and its development from winter to spring, tragedy to comedy, admonition to grace?

Political Theology

Shakespeare's tragicomedies come near to the political stance of 'monarchical counsel': within a largely pro-monarchist structure, disapproval and critique of the present state and its governance are candidly deliberated, along with the venting of more general complaints, but they do not argue for anything like a revolutionary change and the rulers at the end of the plays are restored and sanctified. Pericles, Prospero, Cymbeline and Leontes are not presented as ideal sovereigns and their imperfect characters, as well as the trials they experience, underpin both the narrative curve and political conjecture of the works. The more obviously villainous rulers in these plays – *Pericles*' Antiochus, *Cymbeline*'s Queen, *The Tempest*'s Antonio – are justly disconnected from power (though of course they are not the principal protagonists of these dramas, and have more functional responsibilities). In *The Winter's Tale*, it is more complicated, since the tyrant is also the hero, and as we have seen, it is his purgatorial journey of repentance we witness.

The Winter's Tale offers an illustration of the procedure Shakespeare employs to debate the government of the country without denouncing the monarchical office, *per se*.

---

[485] Shell, *Religion*, p. 214. Cf. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 104.
[486] Shell, *Religion*, p. 214.

The play attentively dialogues contemporaneous religious politics and James' often contentious foreign policies: it venerates the noble aim of a pan-European, post-Reformation peace, but is vigilant to the uneasy conversations involved. Alvin Kernan[487] and Stuart Kurland[488] have recognised the allusions to domestic politics in the play – Leontes/ Hermione analogous to James/ Arbella Stuart;[489] the common trepidation of an intruding royal tyranny[490] – but a complete understanding of the play's politics needs to the include how contemporary religious disputes and James' foreign policy are discussed.

The Winter's Tale's final act union between an idyllic, rustic Bohemia (broadly identifiable as Protestant) and a (traditional and Catholic) Sicily can be regarded as at least superficially emblematic of James' aspiration for a peaceful and diplomatic reunification between the more moderate discourses of post-Reformation Christendom. The Catholic tyrant Leontes is converted to the beliefs of Protestant Bohemia and the two conflicting kingdoms (and faiths) are reconciled through marriage, as James hoped to do with the strategic nuptials of his children to royalty on the continent. Jonathan Bate offers the simple explanation that the court of King James was politically allied with that of Rudolf II, and the characters and dramatic roles of the rulers of Sicily and Bohemia were reversed for reasons of political sensitivity, and in particular to allow it to be performed at the wedding of the Princess Elizabeth.[491] The pastoral genre is not known for precise verisimilitude, and, like the assortment of mixed references to ancient religion and contemporaneous religious figures and customs, included perhaps to underscore the play's fantastical and chimeric quality. As Andrew Gurr puts it, Bohemia is given a seacoast 'to flout geographical realism, and to underline the unreality of place in the play'.[492]

W.B. Paterson[493] has established the degree of James' ecumenism as a key policy ambition from his accession: many regarded the Church of England as a prospective middle way between the respective extremes of the Calvinists in Geneva and the Pope in Rome. So, too, with the moderate and eirenic Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia Rudolf II,[494] a ruler as enthusiastic as James to avert an open religious war in Europe by reuniting the alienated churches across the Empire.

John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1583; second edition, 1610) had (among other things) tried to show the link between a Protestant Bohemia, England, and the Reformation, and was known thoroughly to Shakespeare – he used it intermittently for *King John*, *Henry VI*

---

[487] Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theatre in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 151.

[488] Stuart Kurland, '"We need no more of your advice": Political Realism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991), pp. 365-79.

[489] Sara Jayne Steen has noted that Imogen, the virtuous, cross-dressed heroine of Cymbeline, has sometimes also been read as a reference to Arbella, who was forced to dress as a man in her attempt to evade imprisonment for her claim to the English throne and marriage against James' edict. Sara Jayne Steen, *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 99.

[490] In the canon, only *Macbeth* has more references to 'tyranny' and its cognates; it has eighteen, *The Winter's Tale*, ten.

[491] Jonathan Bate, 'Shakespeare and Jacobean Geopolitics', in *Soul of the Age* (London: Viking Press, 2008), p. 305.

[492] Andrew Gurr, 'The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in The Winter's Tale', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983), p. 422.

[493] W.B. Paterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Studies in Early Modern British History, 2000).

[494] Rudolf II (1552–1612) was Holy Roman Emperor (1576–1612), King of Hungary and Croatia (as Rudolf I, 1572–1608), King of Bohemia (1575–1608/1611) and Archduke of Austria (1576–1608).

and *Henry VIII*, as well as *The Winter's Tale*. *Acts* traces the 'True Religion' from Christ to the Reformation through papal injustice, with Jan Hus's proto-Protestants occupying a crucial position by bridging John Wycliffe and Martin Luther.[495] For Protestant apologists this was imperative in transmitting a providential, originating role to England in the Reformation, but it also of interest to James I and his council in their pursuit of religious concord by a passive shunning of papal domination by European monarchs, aimed at returning to an untainted, moderate Christian community through peaceful means. James' *Premonition to all most Mightie Monarches, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendome* of 1609 – a counterblast to the 'Bellarmine Doctrine' legitimizing the assassination of heretical rulers – finds its fictive parallel in *The Winter's Tale*'s vociferous assertions concerning the impiety of political killing. After Leontes has charged him to murder Polixenes, Camillo reflects:

> If I could find example
> Of thousands that had struck anointed kings
> And flouris'd after, I'd not do't: but since
> Not brass, nor stone, nor parchment bears not one,
> Let villainy itself foreswear't.

<div align="right">(I.ii.357-61)</div>

The topicality of religious politics during *The Winter's Tale*'s composition (c.1609-11) undoubtedly led to many elements being included, such as the pastoral genre for the Protestants – a familiar combination in the Reformation, highlighting the Protestant virtues and corrupting deviation of the Catholic Church from a primitive (and authentic) Christianity.[496] The pastoral community in *The Winter's Tale* is characterized by honourable deeds and piety: the rescuing of the infant Perdita; the compassionate burial of Antigonus; the attitude to gold/ money is charitable and unspoiled; an honest, restrained but still popular – and unpuritan – religious festival is advocated. Perdita also rejects the cultivation of hybrid plants as against nature: Polixenes mistakenly regards her discomfort as untutored naivety, but her reservations about gillyflowers reveal her fears of the harm art will do to nature when it compels it to be converted into what the mind wishes. Moreover, she wonders if she too is one of nature's 'bastards', with her foolish, uneducated peasant 'father', and who her real parents might be. The idea that Perdita is not his (and thus not a lawful heir) had incensed Leontes so that within the ethical structure of the play it is vital that she be cleared of the indictment of illegitimacy.

Time's role (with Truth as its daughter) at the beginning of Act IV would resonate with an audience remembering Elizabeth's accession: Protestant Truth reinstated after Catholic Mary's natural death through Time that 'makes and unfolds error' (IV.i.2). Thomas Dekker's *Whore of Babylon* (c.1606-7) had remembered these events in its considerably venomous attack on Catholicism, written in the wake of the Jesuit (Gunpowder) Plot to assassinate James in November 1605. Here, Time is unable to rouse Truth as she lies sleeping. Mary's funeral procession crosses the boards and Truth without delay awakes to exult Elizabeth the Fairy Queen's joyful accession. Time was regarded as Truth's guardian, especially in Reformation iconography. In a pageant at Elizabeth's 1559 coronation, the figure of Time

---

[495] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 35-42.

[496] As Edmund Spenser had done with *The Faerie Queene*'s (1590/6) celebration of the virtues of holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy.

appeared, guiding another clothed in white silk – his daughter Truth, who held a book in her hand. The book was the Bible in English, and the figures corresponded to the Protestant faith, uncovered at the death of the Catholic Queen Mary. As John Pitcher points out, the Latin version of 'Truth is Time's daughter' – '*Temporis filia veritas*' – was the motto on the title-pages of Robert Greene's stories, including *Pandosto*, the source of *The Winter's Tale*, which was also subtitled 'The Triumph of Time'.[497]

The real Bohemia's Protestant majority were nonetheless ruled by Catholic leaders and correspondingly their fictive counterparts have a recognisably Catholic King in Polixenes: he sees children, through grace's mechanisms, as in a condition of innocence, contra the Calvinist teaching where man is fallen from birth, until saved by Christ's grace.

> POLIXENES: We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk i'th'sun,
> And bleat the one at th'other: what we chang'd
> Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
> The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
> That any did…
>
> (I.ii.67-71)

The language also evokes the pastoral atmosphere that is to follow after Leontes' accusations, and where the Shepherd will echo Polixenes' words, confirming the idea that whilst Perdita is not really the offspring of Bohemia, she will have a Bohemian surrogate father. Gillian Woods also points out that Polixenes' 'fantasy of an eternal present (where the future tense sounds like a residue of the past, 'behind') collapses number and tense, as the 'Two lads' become one 'boy eternal'.'[498]

Leontes' son Mamillius, by contrast, with his deliberate remarks to his mother and the court women and his awareness of supernatural stories as mere 'tales', appears to adhere to the reformed beliefs that children were already associated with the fallen world, and that ghosts were part of unreformed superstition:

> MAMILLIUS: Merry or sad shall't be?
> HERMIONE: As merry as you will.
> MAMILLIUS: A sad tale's best for winter. I have one
>   Of sprites and goblins.
> HERMIONE: Let's have that, good sir.
> Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best
> To fright me with your sprites. You're powerful at it.
>
> (II.i.23-28)

The rogue Autolycus, rambling in Bohemia, also seems to be an oblique Catholic. He has a number of disguises and pseudo-roles in the play – beggar, pedlar, courtier, gentleman – operating as a successor of the deceiving Vice figures in the morality plays of the Tudors. He exists on boundaries, living beneath hedges and roving the nether roads. At the sheep-shearing festival Shakespeare employs for him the polemical vulpine language[499] of a sly

---

[497] Pitcher, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, pp. 80-1.
[498] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 175.
[499] Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) has a fable of a nefarious fox masquerading as a tinker.

peddler of trinkets and other dubious merchandise (and, by extension, idolatrous and popish religious indulgences, thought to confer blessings through the purchased remission of sins):

> Ha, ha! what a fool Honesty is! and Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman! I have sold all my trumpery: not a counterfeit stone, not ribbon, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting: they throng who should buy first, as if my trinkets had been hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer; by which means I saw whose purse was best in picture; and what I saw, to my good use I remembered…

> (IV.iv.600-609)

The Folio's spelling 'tromperie' for 'trumpery' shows the derivation from the French *tromperie* ('lies', 'fraud' or 'deception') and in England often associated with the Catholic practices of relics and popish superstition. This has a further bearing on the provincial (and potentially susceptible) setting of the festival and the religious enchantment of the statue scene (V.iii). In *The Tempest*, Prospero bids Ariel to fetch his worthless finery 'the trumpery in my house' in order to trap the impish trio of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo (IV.i.186).

Seen thus, Autolycus is perhaps meant as the portrayal of an advocate of the seductive, opulent and superstitious old religion, trying to win over the virtuous pastoral Protestants. In him there is delight in the freedoms and licences he enjoys on account of his liberation from society. His lack of concern to reward or castigation in the post-mortem ('For the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it'[500]) was scandalous, and may well reflect a distorted conception of Catholics buying their way out of purgatory. Autolycus is also a form of the popular performer that teases the gullible spectators, and mocks himself; pastoral is a responsive and synthetic genre that frequently deals with the function of art in social order. The sheep-shearing fair embodies popular art by way of the assortment of songs, dances, costumes, and Autolycus's ballads, evoking a long-past but essential variety of popular tradition in England.

Leontes, too, is identifiable as potentially Catholic: he is not only Sicilian but a tyrant, and associated with the Roman Inquisition by threatening to burn Paulina (to which she retorts, twisting his threat, by declaring he is the heretic, not her, the innocent martyr).[501] Moreover, Leontes refers to his (recognisably Catholic) need for priestly penitence and absolution:

> I have trusted thee, Camillo,
> With all the nearest things to my heart, as well
> My chamber-counsels, wherein, priest-like, thou
> Hast cleansed my bosom; I from thee departed
> Thy penitent reformed.

> (I.ii.232-236)

As Robert Miola has pointed out, since Protestants 'emphatically denied the priest any sacramental function in Penance', here the play envisages Leontes' spiritual and marital crisis

---

[500] IV.iii.29-30.
[501] II.iii.110-119.

in 'pointedly Catholic terms.'[502] Yet his redemption comes in a Protestant mode, in a straightforward rapport with faith (that Paulina's requires) and grace (represented by Hermione), without the need for an intervening priest (or equivalent). Leontes comes to comprehend the proper import of sin, recovery, repentance, and salvation in a Protestant arrangement. The questions of how, and the extent to which, Leontes is changed during *The Winter's Tale* are important issues when considering the play's discussion of religious attitudes.

Shakespeare modifies Greene's darker incest narrative, yet elements of it menacingly remain, in part, as we shall see, to disclose the connection between the past and present, as well as Leontes' remorseful transformation. All of Shakespeare's late plays are particularly disturbed with the relationship between fathers and daughters at or near maturity, and all of them disclose traces of incestuous desire. In *The Tempest* Prospero imparts extreme threats of violence intending the preservation of Miranda's chastity; in *Cymbeline* the wicked Queen is resentful of the King's daughter Imogen, and intimates this is a more prominent relationship for him than his marriage; most conspicuously we have Pericles and Marina. As we saw in chapter four, *Pericles* begins with an unequivocal scene of father-daughter incest at Antioch as Pericles presents himself as a suitor to the court facing Antiochus's riddle as well as the truth of incest. Pericles' fear means he can neither challenge the incest, nor decline to answer the riddle. Instead he takes flight and is doomed to an extended succession of sea voyages, finally reuniting with his own lost daughter (another sexual incongruity – a chaste prostitute).

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare opts to pass over the incestuous dynamic in his source – Greene's *Pandosto* – or, at least, he has organized the play to subdue, supress or sublimate this desire. Yet we can still see that Leontes' first meeting with his daughter is besmeared by the taboo of incest: commending her beauty, hypothetically coveting Perdita for himself, he secures an admonition from Paulina: 'Your eye hath too much youth in't' (V.i.224). Henceforth, no additional conversation occurs between father and daughter – the play gives the impression of being too afraid to have them together again onstage lest *Pandosto*'s incestuous yearnings erupt into *The Winter's Tale*. Most unexpectedly beyond Greene, Shakespeare has Leontes' wife Hermione revealed to be alive, returning to claim Leontes, to dispose of that 'youth' in his eye, in order to divert sexual desire back into marriage and clear of incest.

It is significant that the scene in which Leontes recognises Perdita as his daughter is reported not shown,[503] taking place diegetically amid religious diction and Paulina's testing of Leontes' penitence, in a play very much architectonically structured around mimesis: the first three acts might have been recounted to us, rather than shown. (*The Tempest*, sticking to the unities, requires a different stage expedient: Prospero's diegetic narrative in the second scene, where he can inform us of how we have reached this point in the story and can appreciate the engagement between the magician and his stranded aristocrats.) Nonetheless, the diegetic recognition scene of Act V itself recalls the diegetic narrative we discussed above, from the clown, recounting Antigonus's fate at the paws of the bear in Act III, as well as the figure of Time at the start of Act IV to tell us where we are.

Shakespeare's transposable employment of both diegesis and mimesis techniques proposes a dynamic experimentation with dramatic form. If beforehand he investigated questions of character and diverse techniques to communicate interiority (soliloquies,

---

[502] Robert Miola, '"An Alien People Clutching Their Gods"? Shakespeare's Ancient Religions', *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001), p. 41.
[503] V.ii.

dialogue, doubling – continuously trying to disclose the internal), here he is experimenting with narrative design, and asking how to transmute the dilated temporal and spatial lines of romance into drama and potentially theological discussions. Mimesis represents, diegesis reports and counts; one embodies and personifies, the other narrates; one transforms, the other indicates; one knows only an uninterrupted present, the other looks back to a past. Moreover, the diegetic reunion of Leontes and Perdita, recounted gradually by the Gentleman and unseen, culminates the play's reversing of the axiomatic 'seeing is believing': we do not see yet are asked to still believe – 'imagine me, Gentle spectators' says Time;[504] 'I would you did see' entreats the clown[505] – until the next and final scene when we are to believe what we are shown.

Phebe Jensen regards Leontes' madness as 'a form of fanatical iconoclasm partly directed against idolatrous "coactive" arts and exposed as fear of difference, both hermeneutical and sexual',[506] where Leontes' unsubstantiated horror of infidelity can be appreciated as misplaced iconoclasm. In point of fact, it appears that Leontes epitomizes idolatry through his naïve confidence in the physical signals he supposes lay bare Hermione's unfaithfulness. As Gillian Woods has recognised, there is a fundamental semiotic component to Leontes' distrust, collapsing the sign into the thing itself and nourishing a provocative cycle, where he can no longer differentiate the real from the effects of his incendiary thoughts.[507] Moreover, his concern is equally for the 'scandal to the blood o'th' prince, my son' (I.ii.328) as for Hermione's alleged betrayal, which is to say the casting of doubt upon Mamillius' legitimacy as royal heir, and thus unsettling the whole fabric of early modern society.[508] His obsessive stress on mimetic signs seems a self-protective response to their continuing dethronement in the early modern age:

> If I mistake
> In those foundations which I build upon,
> The centre is not big enough to bear
> A schoolboy's top. – Away with her to prison!
> He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty
> But that he speaks.
>
> (II.i.100-105)

Leontes illustrates the naïve reliance on material signs that the reformers were anxious of in their interpretation of Catholic customs. The sixteenth-century Bishop of Salisbury, John Jewel, following Augustine, perceived that when regarding the Eucharist, 'It is a dangerous matter, and a servitude of the soul, to take the sign instead of the thing that is signified'.[509] The Church had, for the reformers like Tyndale, catastrophically substituted with gestures and mementos the emblematic message of the Bible: when the 'priests preached Christ no longer,

---

[504] IV.i.19
[505] III.iii.86
[506] Phebe Jensen, 'Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55:3 (2004), p. 295.
[507] Woods, *Unreformed*, p. 177.
[508] Cf. Belarius in *Cymbeline*: 'Mighty sir, | These two young gentlemen that call me father | And think they are my sons, are none of mine; | They are the issue of your loins, my liege, | And blood of your begetting' (V.v.328-32).
[509] John Jewel, *Two Treatises: I, on the Holy Scriptures, II, on the Sacraments* (Pub. Oxford, 1840; repr. London: Classic Reprint, 2015), p. 231.

then the common people began to wax mad and out of their minds upon the ceremonies'.[510] Thus Catholics are regarded as having forgotten that the function of the rite is to contemplate the divine sacrifice, rather than recreate it. As reformers like Tyndale established, idolatry is founded on a credulous veneration for mimetic signs as supernaturally authoritative and controlling, so that razing the physical forms (the usual procedure of iconoclasm) fails to resolve the difficulty, which is interior rather than public. In the depiction of Leontes we find an examination of the psychology of idolatry that discredits it by exposing it as pitiable before it is malevolent: the idol is correctly vacant and meaningless for the reason that it is exclusive to the idolater.

The tragicomic resolution follows that of the gospels: the schooling, correction, and renovation of the protagonist. Indeed, tragicomedy lends itself to being read in Christian terms, 'since Christianity is itself tragicomically structured in two respects [...] Christ's atonement for the fall of man could be read as a tragedy with a happy ending, while the convention of the double ending, where good and bad characters each receive their just deserts, could be used to prefigure the separation of saved and damned at the end of time.'[511] *The Winter's Tale* both pursues and confuses this conversion model. Emancipation or transcendence need more than merely a straightforward rethink of one's attitude. The focus of *The Winter's Tale* is perhaps ultimately not Leontes but more broadly the scene itself: the aesthetic occurrence in communion with spectators in a public sphere.

Textually it is at times difficult to see Leontes as significantly transformed: he appears compelled into wisdom and regret, but he seems not to attain any meekness, and his development such as it is looks to be an inevitable minimum, prescribed by circumstances. Reappearances of the original oppressor remain until the very end. Yet, for the purposes of the drama, Leontes must be believed (at least) as a reformed and remorseful figure. In truth, it seems that he does not become a moral exemplar, or even worthy of Hermione, but rather we need to understand an amendment to his character that goes beyond either a simplistic moral improvement or a blunt continuation without any significant change.

If his wrath vanishes as rapidly as it materialized (III.ii.150-54), the last act discloses the constraint and uncertainty of that conversion. Cleomenes' submission cited at the head of this chapter ('Sir, you have done enough, and have performed | A saint-like sorrow'[512]), suggests a now permanent sense of grief and self-punishment and which, understood in the context of Aristotelian ethics,[513] shows a reformation of his character, where one becomes a respectable individual by means of a day by day routine, with restraint and self-regulation. There is a spiritual articulation to Cleomenes' testimony, and this scene in general, which gives Leontes' loyalty to his penitential pledge a commendable integrity: 'At the last, | Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil; | With them, forgive yourself' (V.i.5-6). The king of the fifth act listens to the guidance of his intimates that unites the political and religious aspects of kingship and the play. There is Dion's immanent argument to marry once more and generate heirs for the benefit of his realm:

---

[510] William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue; The Supper of the Lord After the True Meaning of John VI. and 1 Cor. XI. and Wm. Tracy's Testament Expounded* (1536; repr. New York: Nabu Press, 2010), p. 81.

[511] Shell, *Religion*, p. 212.

[512] V.i.1-2.

[513] Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics*, trans. David Ross, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 23-37.

> If you would not so,
> You pity not the state, nor the remembrance
> Of his most sovereign name; consider little
> What dangers by his highness' fail of issue
> May drop upon his kingdom and devour
> Incertain lookers-on. What were more holy
> Than to rejoice the former Queen is well?
> What holier than, for royalty's repair,
> For present comfort, and for future good,
> To bless the bed of majesty again
> With a sweet fellow to't?'   (V.i.24-34)

and Paulina's transcendent contention to pay attention to the substance of Apollo's oracle:

> There is none worthy,
> Respecting her that's gone. Besides, the gods
> Will have fulfilled their secret purposes;
> For has not the divine Apollo said,
> Is't not the tenor of his oracle,
> That King Leontes shall not have an heir
> Till his lost child be found? Which that it shall,
> Is all as monstrous to our human reason
> As my Antigonus to break his grave
> And come again to me, who, on my life,
> Did perish with the infant. 'Tis your counsel
> My lord should to the heavens be contrary,
> Oppose against their wills. *[To Leontes]* Care not for issue;
> The crown will find an heir. Great Alexander
> Left his to th'worthiest; so his successor
> Was like to be the best.   (V.i.34-49)

Leontes' rejection of remarriage shows some form of internal transformation, even before Paulina's reminder of the oracle: '[I] still think of | The wrong I did myself' (V.i.8-9). The burden of the damages committed against both his kingdom and his wife are firmly placed upon himself, and Paulina operates as a continual thorn in his side to guard against complacency in his penitence. Her ministry to Leontes is a victorious one, so that he now *communicates* in a composed and restrained fashion 'at the furthest remove from the hyperboles which expressed his distortion of the truth.'[514] Dion and Cleomenes' suggestion is well meaning but straightforward, and the political element to it must be united with the religious one in Paulina's more demanding route. The courtiers seem to have an interlocutory purpose here, making clear Leontes' pious steadfastness, dedicated to the divine will that he earlier rejected. Dion and Cleomenes seem to have less faith than even the sinner-king. The entrance of Perdita and Florizel are needed, however, to both inject elation into the king and play, as well as confirm the political element the courtiers are concerned with: namely the

---

[514] Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 139.

production of an heir for the realm. They convey the innate vigour of youth and the pastoral to a jaded kingdom grown old and sombre.

Perdita and Florizel's marriage and the coming together of their feuding parents would surely have been easy to regard as a peaceable triumph for Protestant principles. *The Winter's Tale* delineates its religious associations sensitively, especially since James I was contemporaneously seeking to harmonise religious groups across Europe. These (as it would turn out, excessively optimistic) hopes of a Christian reunification with a restrained Catholicism, devoid of Roman despotism, were rendered in repeatedly ferocious and apocalyptic terms, not least by James himself in his *Premonition*, with the Pope portrayed as the Anti-Christ – though as Anthony Milton has rightly made known, the Catholic Church as a whole was by and large perceived and imagined in a mollifying way.[515] The figurative spiritual language drawn upon to express Perdita's homecoming to Sicily reflects these aspirations, where her attractiveness ('the most peerless piece of earth, I think, | That e'er the sun shone bright on', V.i.94-95) can be seen as an allegorical conveyance of a Protestant mission to Catholic territory, its sway able to 'quench the zeal | Of all professors else, make proselytes | Of who she but bid follow.' (ll.107-9) These 'professors' are those that profess a religious faith, so that, following the Gentleman's comment, if Perdita were to instigate a new religion, she might extinguish or freshen the fanaticism of those who pronounce adherence to other faiths, making them converts ('proselytes'). The exact breed of 'professors' of religion meant here has been much debated. J. H. P. Pafford denoted 'professors of Christianity',[516] while Frank Kermode identified the Puritans. Stephen Orgel, citing the *OED*, argued for 'a professed member of a religious order'.[517] Whatever the precise connotation intended by the Gentleman's term, there is evidently a harmonizing, moderating role supposed for the daughter (and sole living heir) of the wayward king. There is a noticeable echo, too, of Jesus' charge 'follow me' to his disciples in the Gospels (cf. Mark 10:21 and Luke 9:23).

During the later stages of the play a distinctive combination of an apocalyptic and hermetic language is fused, an intermingling of zealous imagery and eirenical intentions familiar to England in the early seventeenth century under James I. The breaking of the old world and the redemption of mankind through the sacrifice of Christ[518] are called upon to describe Leontes and Camillo's response to acknowledging Perdita:

> GENTLEMAN: There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture.
> They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed.
> A notable passion of wonder appeared in them …
>
> (V.ii.13-16)

The 'one destroyed' seems to refer to the necessary demolition preparatory to the foundation of a New Jerusalem, one of a number of often momentary references not likely to be missed by religiously well-informed listeners. Crowing over the straightforwardness of his trivial conquests, the pseudo-Catholic thief Autolycus is able to call out: 'I see this is the time | that

---

[515] Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 105.

[516] J. H. P. Pafford, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (London: Thomson, 1967; 2nd ed. 1999), p. 137n. Cf. Katherine to Wolsey in *Henry VIII*: 'Ye turn me into nothing. Woe upon ye, | all such false professors!' (III.i.11), and Matthew 23:15: 'Woe be unto you, Scribes and Pharises, hypocrites: for ye compass sea and land to make one of your profession.'

[517] Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 213n.

[518] Christians believing that Christ died to atone for mankind, 'for the ransom of many' (Mark 10:45).

the unjust man doth thrive' (IV.iv.677-8) – the success and affluence of the iniquitous and impious was an everyday sentiment that echoed a variety of biblical references:

> I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading
> himself like a green bay tree.
>
> (Psalm 37:35)

> Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?
>
> (Job 21:7)

The second recognition scene, enacted rather than merely reported, has Hermione speak her first de-petrified words in a religious language that would resonate with an erudite Jacobean audience:

> You gods, look down,
> And from your sacred vials pour your graces
> Upon my daughter's head!
>
> (V.iii.121-3)

Whilst this is a widespread metaphor from a ritual of anointment, such as the Christian baptism, it is also likely to allude to the seven vials[519] of James I's *Premonition*, where the transference of the seventh and final vial would proclaim the New Jerusalem on the Day of Judgement.

Douglas Brooks-Davies[520] has highlighted the hermetic nature of the closing scenes of *The Winter's Tale*, but the play's religio-political framework shows this to be the wider ecumenical hermeticism of the many in Europe striving for broad-mindedness and a lasting Christian reunification. The coming to life of Hermione's[521] statue seems to pay some form of respect to hermetic magic, though it is not clear how direct Shakespeare was being, or indeed how familiar he was with specifically hermetic texts since moving statues and the like were everywhere in Renaissance invention.[522] In hermetic magic, such statues were frequently emanaters of integrity and goodness, bringing about the moral restructuring of dissolute municipalities.[523] One of the period's foremost advocates of a hermetically-led religious peace in Europe, was the English occultist/ magus John Dee. Dee himself, along with fellow magi such as Robert Fludd, was attracted to the Bohemian city of Prague, where a variety of hermetic approaches to knowledge were practised and discussed. Dee had spoken just prior to his death and when *The Winter's Tale* was being written in c.1608-9, of the 'wonder rooms'

---

[519] That is, the vials of the wrath of God from Revelation 16:1.

[520] Douglas Brooks-Davies, *The Mercurian Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 140-2.

[521] As E.E. Duncan-Jones has pointed out, in the early seventeenth century Hermione's name would sound closer to '*Har*-mione' than today, thus permitting her to be related to Harmonia, the goddess of concord. E.E. Duncan-Jones, 'Hermione in Ovid and Shakespeare', *Notes and Queries* 211 (1996), pp. 138-9. In the Renaissance, scholars saw Hermione/ Harmonia as referring to universal harmony and civic unity; cf. Alastair Fowler, 'Leontes' contrition and the repair of nature', *Essays and Studies* 31 (1978), p. 39.

[522] Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972; repr. London: Routledge Classics, 2001), pp. 11-13.

[523] Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964; repr. London: Routledge Classics, 2001), p. 54.

in Prague, where mechanical statues caused a sensation. Another contemporary resonance for *The Winter's Tale* is the poet and composer Thomas Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque* (premiered on Twelfth Night, 1607, and with costumes, sets and stage effects designed by Inigo Jones), which had knights that transmuted into trees made of gold, that were then restored to life by the command of Apollo.[524]

Thus, the exultant climax of *The Winter's Tale* juxtaposes a hermetic representation of religious improvement and accord (the animating statue) with an apocalyptic language of transformation and deliverance (the vials). *Grace* is bestowed upon Leontes through reunion with his forsaken spouse;[525] his personal salvation is enacted through the endowment of divine clemency. Seeing as we have done Leontes as resembling a Catholic sovereign, we are also therefore shown his conversion to what can be straightforwardly understood as a Protestant Christianity, the errant monarch rehabilitated to the True Religion. Leontes does not perform any virtuous deeds to realise this change. As Stephen Orgel has proposed,[526] his salvation is accomplished by that most predominant of Protestant theological beliefs in contradistinction to the teachings of the Catholic Church: *sola fide*, by faith alone. Paulina,[527] in her capacity as intermediary, says to Leontes: 'It is requir'd | You do awake your faith' (V.iii.94-5) in order for the near-miracle of his wife's restoration to transpire. His emblematically Protestant daughter Perdita watches in appreciation – and was earlier vigilant to exclude a superstitious (Catholic) manner of worship from the situation (V.iii.43). Hence the play is brought to a close in accordance with James I's pervasive aspiration for the conversion of Catholics to his own brand of tolerant and restrained Protestantism.[528]

A superficially positive spin is thus placed on James' global and religious power politics in a subtle yet compelling fashion in *The Winter's Tale*, but the play is assiduous to incorporate reservations to this depiction as well through Polixenes' resolve to decide upon his son Florizel's choice of bride:

> POLIXENES: [*Removes his disguise*]
>
>   Mark you divorce, young sir,
> Whom son I dare not call. Thou art too base
> To be acknowledged. Thou a sceptre's heir,
> That thus affects a sheep-hook? [*to Shepherd*] Thou,
>   old traitor,
> I am sorry that by hanging thee I can
> But shorten thy life one week. [*to Perdita*] And thou,
>   fresh piece
> Of excellent witchcraft, whom of force must know
> The royal fool thou cop'st with – …

---

[524] Brooks-Davies, *Mercurian*, p. 96.

[525] In the first three acts, Hermione dominates use of the word: five times out of its six instances; she also uses it, as we have seen, in her sole speech upon her return in Act V.

[526] Stephen Orgel, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 59-60.

[527] Shakespeare's coinage, 'Paulina' likely alludes to one of Christianity's founding fathers, St. Paul the Apostle. A preferred figure among Protestant theologians, Luther's interpretation of Paul's writings influenced his doctrine of *sola fide*, particularly the Pauline notion that salvation cannot come about from the works of the law (cf. Romans 3:28-30).

[528] It is not unreasonable to see James' reflection in the Apollonian Oracle of Act III. An instructive and enlightening edifier, Apollo was everything James aspired to be and the king was regularly depicted as such in contemporary entertainments.

I'll have thy beauty scratched with briars and made
More homely than thy state. [*to Florizel*] For thee,
    fond boy,
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
That thou no more shalt see this knack, as never
I mean thou shalt, we'll bar thee from succession,
Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin,
Far than Deucalion off.

                    (IV.iv.422-436)

James' intra-national religious and marital policies of ecumenical pacifism were far from unanimously backed, either at court or in the wider country. The robustly Protestant Prince Henry detested the notion of marrying a Catholic princess, and favoured a military not pacifist involvement in Europe (and indeed it was only the Prince's premature death in November 1612 that thwarted his enforced marriage to Maria of Savoy). Shakespeare offers us an enlightened image of the tyrant-father Polixenes, matching the tyrant-husband Leontes, in an age when most would have accepted these patriarchal roles as part of society's essential constitution.

This seems to undermine, or at least qualify, the play's final image of harmonious unity and is supported by the conscious allusions to the convoluted stratagems and improbable outcome of events:

ROGERO: How goes it now, sir? This news, which is called true, is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion. Has the king found his heir?

                    (V.ii.27-9)

PAULINA: That she is living,
Were it but told you, should be hooted at
Like an old tale. But it appears she lives,
   Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while.   (V.iii.115-18)

The onset of the Thirty Years War, which would tear Europe apart, a few years after the first staging of *The Winter's Tale,* indicates Shakespeare's alternative, understated representation of the ephemeral, idealistic nature of James' policies was not so incredible. As a consequence, the very synthetic nature of the play becomes a profound declaration of scepticism towards the religious politics of James' court and beyond. If the play seeks to honour the optimism for a religious settlement after the burden of the Reformation, and in so doing prop up the supremacy of the Jacobean state, it does so with counter-discourses destabilising these expectations, and critical of the integrity of their particulars.

CHAPTER SIX

Catastrophe and Authority in *The Tempest*

Shakespeare had a distinct interest in staging diverse emotional-intellectual perspectives and arranging dramatic circumstances which evoke varied and dynamic reactions from spectators. Concepts of truth as complex, concealed or discursive were ones which the social engagements and processes of the post-Reformation period made commonplace in application and significance. Scepticism – in one form or another – was perhaps an instinctive consequence of this, and one well-matched to the dialogic quality of drama.[529] Scepticism itself was not inherently or initially atheistic – it could (and can) inspire or bolster faith in an indeterminate, iniquitous cosmos – but, like drama, it might nurture such attitudes if it metamorphosed in more unorthodox courses and, as an oratorical viewpoint, atheism is purposefully fashioned to provoke condemnation, and such figures in real life or drama could have anticipated such denigration.[530]

As a subversive and truculent character, Prospero might be expected to offer a possibility for the auditor to wear and appraise the magician's robes of sedition and scepticism, even if he is not so obviously as provocative as figures like Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Prospero relinquishes his powers, but functionally so as he retires home; magic and scepticism are not unequivocally censured by the play.[531] The world of *The Tempest* (unlike Marlowe's Wittenberg) is a much more self-contained imaginative creation, an isolated creative space of relative autonomy, perhaps negating the need for overt denunciation of mystical agitation (in the less sequestered milieu of the Scottish play, Macbeth's reticent involvement with the supernatural is reproved by penalty). Heterocosms reveal how poets and playwrights are less restricted than the vendors of non-fiction to distinguish resemblances amongst diverse belief-systems and spiritual practices, whether examined against Christianity or overtly incorporating some of its rudiments and apparatuses. John Cox has powerfully argued that suspicion and doubt as precursors to scepticism can be discovered in the way that thinkers criticized gullibility relating to occurrences peripheral or subsidiary to Christian theology – witches, ghosts and magic.[532]

In the context of the post-Reformation period, playwrights' inventive associations with doubt and the supernatural both contrast and connect with the theological sphere where discords were habitually more emphasized than surmounted: upholding their dogma, both Protestants and Counter-Reformation Catholics were wont to underscore the means by which their account of Christianity was differentiated and sanctified (for Catholics this was further obfuscated by the variances between England's old religion and the post-Trent creed). *The Tempest* stages a vivid treatment of contemporary religious debate and its socio-political corollaries, and as such it offers a compelling view of the catastrophe the Reformation wrought, as well as its occasion for new Christian communities and a revitalised faith.

*

---

[529] John Cox, *Seeming Knowledge: Shakespeare and Sceptical Faith* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); Richard Strier, 'Shakespeare and the Skeptics', *Religion and Literature* 32:2 (2000), pp. 171-186.

[530] William Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[531] Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 13.

[532] John Cox, 'Shakespeare's Religious and Moral Thinking: Skepticism or Suspicion?', *Religion and Literature* 36:1 (2004), pp. 39-66.

In many ways, the assumed chronological location of *The Tempest* has become inextricable from much critical treatment of the play, especially in its analogous connection with magic and creativity: articulating where it fits in Shakespeare's oeuvre is an interpretative act so that the view of *The Tempest* as a 'last play' is interwoven with the idea of it as an elegiac summation and poetic self-portrait.[533] If *The Tempest* has largely benefitted from this aesthetic supposition of authorial lateness, others have perhaps suffered from a correspondingly chronologically informed evaluation: the terms 'early', 'late' or 'mature' – like 'medieval' and 'early modern' – carry with them embedded value judgments that have a tendency to predetermine our response. Because critical (and popular) history has desired to connect *The Tempest*'s themes and characters directly with Shakespeare, they have paralyzed a network of unexamined areas of the play's hinterland.[534]

As this implies, there seems here to be an erroneous assumption at work – that what Shakespeare is composing subsists as somehow autobiographical. This is to misconstrue the nature of the writing Shakespeare and his contemporaries undertook in this period: the interior functioning of the author would not exist until later literary trends through Romanticism. Yet the notion of *The Tempest* operating as an allegory of Shakespeare the playwright has a long critical history, particularly in the Romantic period, with the magic within the play and the magic of theatre being a common association, many regarding Prospero as a translucent mask for Shakespeare the dramatist.[535] Throughout the play Prospero designates his magic as 'my art',[536] using it to transplant people around the island/ stage in order to generate discourses and consequential encounters. He also controls both the present and the past of the characters, disclosing to us histories that cannot be impartially substantiated.

Decisively attached to this protuberant myth of Shakespeare/ Prospero, is the issue of the play's chronology. Even though it does derive from the end of Shakespeare's career in London, there is no unambiguous external confirmation that *The Tempest* was his last sole authored play. Yet precisely because we want the play's departures[537] to read as Shakespeare's leave-taking, we determine to station it firmly at the conclusion (and as culmination) of his working life. The language of *The Tempest*'s epilogue connects farewell with liberation, and with death and fulfilment, dissolving the illusion between theatre and reality, which we then manipulate to demand that the play must dramatize Shakespeare's own state of mind. Yet after *The Tempest* (as well as *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*), it seems he worked with John Fletcher on *The Two Noble Kinsman*, *Henry VIII*, and the now lost *Cardenio*, so that it is emphatically not his last writing for the stage (even if it *might* be his final unaccompanied play).

Chronology and authorial interpretation have thus developed into a reciprocal implementation: *The Tempest* must be Shakespeare's last play because his manifestation as Prospero portrays his own abandonment of theatrical art. Curiously, some earlier commentators concluded – perhaps not unreasonably – the very opposite: that because *The Tempest* was systematized first in the 1623 Folio it was Shakespeare's earliest play, and that

[533] Russ McDonald, 'Reading *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1990), pp. 15-28.
[534] Andrew Gurr, 'New Directions: Sources and Creativity in *The Tempest*', in Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest: A Critical Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 93-114.
[535] Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
[536] In seven instances across this short play.
[537] 'Our revels now are ended. These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air' (IV.i.148-50).

the drama underpinned this view – its relative brevity meant that it was the exertion of someone incapable of creating a full length play (instead of the idea that it was the work of someone dexterously proficient at dramatic distillation and condensation at the end of a prolific career).[538] In many ways, what we presume to find in a play oversees what we actually do discover there.

Prospero's dominance of *The Tempest* has certainly invigorated the autobiographic argument – the other characters tend to be flat, two-dimensional figures: Ferdinand and Miranda lack the sprightly dynamism of earlier romantic pairings; Antonio has none of the antagonistic, villainous vigour of an Aaron or Iago. Nevertheless, Ariel and Caliban are absorbing constructions and, as Emma Smith has pointed out, Prospero should perhaps be regarded like Marlowe's Doctor Faustus as an adaptation of the late medieval morality play technique of *psychomachia*, where the interior of a character is revealed through exteriorising components into different actors on the stage. We might then see Ariel and Caliban as figuring the psychosomatic components of Prospero that he struggles to control.[539]

If there are undoubtedly theatrical and meta-theatrical connections between Prospero and dramatists, these need not be autobiographic correspondences between Prospero and *Shakespeare*. Prospero's responsibility in scripting the drama of revenge against his adversaries extends a long association in the Elizabethan revenge tragedy genre between the avenger and the artist – see in particular, at the beginning of the genre's history, Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (c.1585-8), where Hieronimo enacts his revenge through a play he has written and presented before the Spanish court.[540] It is a structural and thematic concern of revenge tragedy, the genre *The Tempest* works to redraft, that allows the association of theatricality and artistry in the character of the revenger. Thus, a claim that Prospero's position in the play resembles a dramatist does not entail that he is a self-portrait of Shakespeare. Moreover, seeing Prospero as Shakespeare has required the magus to be ultimately positive, yet more recent Prosperos have frequently been petulant, belligerent and despotic – a compromised view of Prospero that collapses any idealised connection to an idealised Shakespeare. Such a reading relates in part to the perception of him as avenger, but also to reinterpretations of the play as 'a theatrical microcosm of the imperial paradigm'[541] probing the language of authority, control and defeat,

For much of its recent critical (and staged) history *The Tempest* became, and to some extent remains, a cultural certificate of colonialism and oppression.[542] Prospero was plausibly turned from inspiring magus to cantankerous imperialist, his art representing the law and technology of that domination;[543] Caliban and Ariel are the subjugated natives, conquered by

---

[538] Cf. Emma Smith's discussion in: *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[539] Emma Smith, '*The Tempest*', 'Approaching Shakespeare' Lecture Series, Oxford University, 14th November 2011. Available at: podcasts.ox.ac.uk/people/emma-smith Accessed: 19th March 2017.

[540] Andrew Gurr & J. R. Mulryne, eds, *The Spanish Tragedy* (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), pp. xi-xviii; Lukas Erne, '*The Spanish Tragedy*: Framing Revenge', in *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 95-118.

[541] Viginia Mason Vaughan & Alden T. Vaughan, eds, 'Brave new world', in *The Tempest* (London: Thomson Publishing, 1999), pp. 39-47; 40.

[542] Cf. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), Ch.5, 'Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne', pp. 129-63; Peter Hulme, 'Hurricanes in the Caribees: The Constitution of the Discourse of English Colonialism', in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francis Barker (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1981).

[543] See Anita Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, Anita Loomba & Martin Orkin, eds (London: Routledge New Accents, 1998); Oscar Mannoni,

their epistemological – European – superiors.[544] These reasonable and often very valuable embeddings of the play in colonial contexts have been challenged, with many arguing that if *The Tempest* does have a 'relation to the new world colonial activity it is not writ deep into its texture; the relation is allusive and elusive, existing primarily in the negations, like Ariel's or Trinculo's, that deny that the experience on the island is the experience of the Americas.'[545] Perhaps more palpable contexts inform *The Tempest*, and a view of the play as a colonial discourse might 'itself [be] act of cultural imperialism.'[546] Nevertheless, colonial and post-colonial perspectives can facilitate our consideration of much of the drama's intellectual and cultural topography, even if some such readings can sometimes be too monolithic in their approach.[547] Colonial interpretations of *The Tempest* frequently intersect and disclose many of the play's related issues concerning dynastic anxieties and political absolutism, themselves interconnected to the drama's post-Reformation context.

As we saw in *The Winter's Tale*, James I saw himself a mediator of Europe's religious conflicts, and his children's marriages as opportunities for intra-European religious union. Across in the Holy Roman Empire, Rudolf II – known, too, as a devotee of the occult arts and learning – had been forced to surrender the crowns of Austria, Hungary and Moravia to his brother Matthias.[548] In *The Tempest* Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian are concerned with distinctly European trophies and jurisdictions; Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban have (drunken) aspirations to a better life, though they are thwarted. The Europeans eventually abandon the island, but they have entirely transformed life there, not least in teaching Caliban everything he knows, with Prospero not contesting Caliban's own (inheritance-based) claim that 'this island's mine' (I.ii.332).

Authority in the period of *The Tempest's* composition takes on a less straightforwardly religious and more political form, as religious validation became detached and destabilised. Clashes over the authoritative foundation of religious truth had repercussions beyond the institutional interests of the Church of Rome and its Protestant rivals, since theologically apprised standards comprised the fundamental endorsement of authority *per se*. When the disagreements intensified and doctrinal disparities became inextricable, the pursuit of authority's foundation would not be limited to within a religious purview, ultimately preceding to an ascendancy of secular absolutism and control.

The reformers' insistence on the primacy of the Bible, questioning priestly and papal authority, gestured at a liberation but in effect lead to the enablement and empowerment of its secular interpreters. The secularisation, or desacralization, of authority necessitated that its association to power be renewed and restructured, eventually reorganizing the significance of authority as predominantly a political characteristic of the sovereign state. If

Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, trans. Pamela Powesland (1956; repr. University of Michigan Press, 1990).

[544] Cf. Trevor R. Griffiths, '"This island's mine": Caliban and colonialism', *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983), pp. 158-80; Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[545] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routedge, 2000), p. 187.

[546] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[547] Deborah Willis, 'Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism', *Studies in English Literature* 1500-1900: 29 (1989), pp. 277-89; David Norbrook, '"What Cares These Roarers for the Name of King?": Language and Utopia in *The Tempest*', in *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan & Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992).

[548] Peter Marshall, *The Mercurial Emperor: The Magic Circle of Rudolf II in Renaissance Prague* (London: Pimlico Press, 2007); Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Princes and Artists, Patronage and Ideology at Four Habsburg Courts 1517–1633* (1976; London: Thames & Hudson, 1991).

the Reformation initiated formidable movements of deliberation unsympathetic to the imposition of external authority, a generalised sense of insecurity inclined rulers to embrace a politics of order and imperative. Quentin Skinner ended the second volume of his *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* with the assertion that, '[by] the beginning of the seventeenth century, the concept of the State -- its nature, its powers, its right to command obedience had come to be regarded as the most important object of analysis in European political thought.'[549] The more acknowledged and unchallenged moral underpinning of medieval authority could not endure the damage to Christian concord in the post-Reformation era and, at least in part, the forfeiture of moral authority of the Church invigorated dependence on and confidence in more unequivocal arrangements of absolutist coercion, whilst also leading to the elucidation of the secular division concerning the moral and the political, and that involving authority and power. The progression of this illumination transpired circuitously way by means of the intuitive conjunction by advocates of religious reform and secular leaders striving for the solidification and amalgamation of their national sovereignty.[550]

More regional distinction and variation in ecclesiastical disposition occurred through this convergence, with increasing subordination to the constraints and obligations of each state's dominion, eventually culminating in the crystallisation of political autonomy, the disengagement of moral from political authority, and a clarification of Machiavelli's earlier separation of power and authority, a distinction not made by early reformers like Luther and Calvin – as Robert Weimann has argued, their vocabulary remained submerged in the language of the past and 'in its lexical order clearly precedes (even while it helps bring about) modern differentiations among socio-cultural locations of authority'.[551] Richard Tuck has advocated that it was only later that a new political language would be developed with a terminology responsive to the 'distinction between power and authority, which has been a familiar concept with which to analyse politics since the 17th Century, [and] could not be found (they claimed) in the writings of their predecessors'.[552]

As we will see, there are clear connections here to the way *The Tempest* problematizes the issues of power and authority, most particularly within Prospero, but elsewhere as well. The profound crisis in traditional locations of authority – affecting religious, political, and aesthetic appellates – helped foster a concurrent propagation of signifying practices and communicative apparatuses, with representation striving to manage the shifting applications of language and power. Text and context are no longer familiar opposites but a dynamic and integrated system, making meaning and creating discourse, text functioning as context for other texts, at the same time as the context is itself exposed as a text commanding explanation prior to it surrendering its connotations. Yet, even 'if a meaning is context-bound, the number of meaningful contexts is boundless … [and] a single point can be intersected by an infinite number of lines … they are valuable as they – and only as they – serve the interests

---

[549] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 2: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 349.

[550] Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 24-7.

[551] *Ibid.*, p.48; 'A Protestant Author-Function: Luther' and 'The Spirit betwixt Polity and Scripture: Calvin', pp. 31-41; 42-52.

[552] Richard Tuck, 'Power and Authority in Seventeenth Century England', *The Historical Journal* 17:1 (1974), pp. 43-61; *cf.* Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

and needs of the interpreter.'[553] *The Tempest*, and other plays, can be gainfully read in relation to a range of historical, and no single one is to be absolutely endorsed or denied. Yet the assumptions of so much historical criticism – Stephen Greenblatt, Leah Marcus, Howard Felperin – rests upon the assumption that 'Shakespeare and his audience would have belonged to Prospero's party and seen the play as celebrating the restoration of monarchical legitimacy as a return to transcendent natural order.'[554] Because of this, the more nonconformist attitudes and disruptive repercussions of *The Tempest* tend to be treated either as eventually controlled by its supposed conventionality or as unintentional consequences of the indeterminacy of debate, the subversive negation of meaning to be inhibited by authorial purposes or intentions. By creatively engaging with the Reformation and its consequences, Shakespearean drama goes against endorsing the status quo, problematizing prevailing structures of power and faith.

Shakespeare might have been of the King's Men but he was only residually a regal ornament, and contemporary drama was economically and socially influential to a wider public, reflecting the communal stimulations of the age and a literary public discourse that foregrounded a political one, so that *The Tempest* stages a highly developed responsiveness to the language/power axis. It does not deem verbal communication or the notion of authority as changeless truths and more willingly than setting a direct, *ur*-human world against an inexorably imagined language, it is interested in language's precise perspectives, and the way political and linguistic arenas intersect: 'all of the play's utopian ideals, not excepting Ariel's, come up for ironic scrutiny in the course of the play, precisely because they tend to an idealism that refuses to recognize the material constraints of existing structures of power and discourse.'[555]

*

The Tempest has good claim to be Shakespeare's most rigorously structured play: nine separate scenes that are symmetrically balanced[556] with the central scene (III.i) of Marina and Ferdinand's betrothal, so that the effect is one of 'the multiplicity of a hall of mirrors, in which everything reflects and re-reflects everything else.'[557] Exclusively with *The Comedy of Errors* it more or less conforms to the unities of time, place and action. Yet *The Tempest*'s form turns the rigid classical unities against themselves through an opening out into unbounded time and space, and a dialogue with a widely-held post-Reformation view that this age was the last, and that historical time was coming to an end.[558]

---

[553] Kastan, *Theory*, p. 196.

[554] David Norbrook, '"What Cares These Roarers for the Name of King?": Language and Utopia in *The Tempest*', in *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan & Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 22.

[555] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[556] For a scenic illustration that makes evident the play's symmetry, see: Mark Rose, *Shakespearean Design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 173.

[557] Harold Brooks, '*The Tempest*: what sort of play?' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London: British Academy Press, 1980; repr. 2009), p. 37.

[558] The events of the foregoing twelve years are remembered (or misremembered) by the cast. Cf. Günter Walch, '"What's Past is Prologue": Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in *The Tempest*' in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot & Michele Willems, eds, *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 223-38. Walch highlights several discourses developed in the play and produced by its island setting. Though colonial aspects are discussed, Walch regards the role of time and memory as more significant – and central to the play's metatheatricality and self-deconstruction.

Time literally changed during the Reformation, and that change became confusion and disorder. Julius Caesar's directive during the Roman Republic in 46 B.C. set the calculation for the calendar year even if it was 11 minutes too long each year – a substantial inaccuracy over the centuries. By 1582 the mathematician Clavius had worked out the margin of error for his Pope and Gregory XIII decreed that 4th October was to become 15th October, in order to make up the difference. The year was also to start on 1st January rather than 25th March (ironically removing tribute to the Virgin Mary on the Solemnity of the Annunciation, and restoring the pagan date).

Unsurprisingly, both Orthodox and Protestant Christians looked upon such Roman pronouncements as illegitimate, dishonest papal behaviour (even if specialists knew the adding up was correct). Implementation of the new calendar therefore varied wildly across Europe, with France, Portugal, Spain and Italy keen to show their allegiance to Rome by instigating the change at once, while elsewhere in Europe local decisions were made leading to commotion over exact dates that would become horrendous for later historians.[559]

As a literal and symbolic instance of the destructive role of the Reformation, these disagreements over time are one of the most enlightening for, to the sixteenth and seventeenth century mind, time was not merely a practical demarcation of the days, months and years, it was a resounding and consequential facet of the cosmic drama charted by God. Human life might be arbitrary and buffeted by storms, death and disease, but this uncertainty could be mitigated by the application of patterns and logic, laid down by a benevolent creator God. The Reformation needed ordinary people to believe that the Bible recorded God's plan, that the confusions of this globe were only a minor part of the bigger divine picture, and that 'the momentous events through which they were living signified that the visible world was about to end.'[560] Without a pervasive expectation of an imminent, spectacular change, the power of the challenge to the Church was diminished. Moreover, without acknowledging this background of thought too much of the Reformation can be misunderstood as 'a vandalistic, mean-minded or money-grabbing assault on a settled round of devotion and a world of beauty and celebration.'[561] The English Reformation has often had this reputation, especially given the wreckage to religious construction and ceremonies during the reigns of Henry VIII and his son Edward VI.

At the same time, the reign of Mary Tudor has been long considered as a sterile period of callous subjugation and suppression, when a reactionary ruler instigated a fated attempt to re-impose Catholicism upon a reluctant populace. We have now, at last, come to better understand the nature of traditional religion in England, especially during Mary's short reign. Linda Porter and Eamon Duffy's work in particular has looked beyond the administration of 'Bloody Mary' that has been promoted by Protestant mythology as an outlandish deviation and anomaly in the headlong advancement of the nation.[562] Duffy has compellingly argued that Mary and her government were neither incompetent nor relentlessly retrograde. Directed by Cardinal Pole, Mary's Church significantly overturned the religious upheaval impressed by her half-brother Edward VI. Stimulated and enthused by the principles and proceedings of the Counter-Reformation across on the continent, ecclesiastical leaders and

---

[559] Andrew Cunningham & Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 50-52.
[560] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 550.
[561] *Ibid.*, p. 551.
[562] Linda Porter, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen* (London: Piatkus Press, 2009); Eamon Duffy, *The Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

sovereign re-established the papacy in England and commenced an efficacious crusade of propaganda working both via the pulpit and a multitudinous network of propaganda, of which the incinerations were a successful component, even if they could also prove unpopular in some areas.[563] Mary's premature and childless death impeded this progress and redirected English history's course once again, yet this apparent interregnum discloses how far conventional religion in England remained widespread and accepted. Hugh Latimer would sermonize on the eve of Mary's reign in 1552:

> We know by scripture and all learned men affirm the same, that the world was meant to endure six thousand years. Now of the six thousand be passed already five thousand five hundred and fifty-two, and yet this time which is left shall be shortened for the elect's sake, as Christ himself witnesseth.[564]

Latimer's burning at the stake in Oxford under Mary I was for many vehement Protestants only to add to the feeling of imminent catastrophe, with the Bible substantiating – via an assortment of accounts – how and when the Last Days would take place.[565] The Book of Revelation was the focus of much of the debate and expectation. As the Bible's final book and Apocalypse, it was a primary source for demonstrative exaltation and restless expectation, much of it with acute political implications. Erasmus had not given the book much significance, doubting its canonical status and treating it with his unceremoniously imperturbable spiritual detachment. Early reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Melanchthon similarly distrusted its message, though Luther would have his German Bible's Revelation sumptuously illustrated; the electrifying story was hard to ignore, particularly if the pictures were intensely anti-papal, and anti-papal readings of Revelation afforded one acceptable motivation for taking it seriously. Yet beyond this, it was only later, amid the bitter struggles of Reformed Protestantism against Counter-Reformation Catholicism, that Revelation's ideas found more respectability: martyrologist John Foxe wrote in *Acts and Monuments* of the Church's decline into corruption and its looming restoration with the Last Days, as laid down in Revelation.[566]

Shakespeare's playwriting career was marked by catastrophic events that shaped the world around him and informed his creative cosmos: the plague remained a constant and virulent presence; the appalling weather conditions of the 1590s, producing the most appalling harvests in living memory (and probably for centuries).[567] When the recollection of this desolation was starting to fade, politics offered a new set of upheavals which culminated in the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618.[568]

Both Catholics and Protestants experienced God continually interceding into the world, prepared to make candid proclamations to it, whether through environmental

---

[563] Porter, *Mary Tudor*, pp. 358-9; Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 267.

[564] George Elwes Corrie, ed., *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer: Sometime Bishop of Worcester, Martyr 1555* (London: Classic Reprints, 2015), p. 27.

[565] Cf. Matthew 24; Daniel 1-7.

[566] Andrew Cunningham & Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), espec. Chapter 2, 'The White Horse: Religion, Reformation and Revelation', pp. 19-91.

[567] *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, 'The Black Horse: Food, F(e)ast and Famine', pp. 200-246, espec. pp. 202-8; 234-42.

[568] Peter H. Wilson, 'Beginnings: Trouble in the Heart of Christendom', in *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 24-36.

occurrence or the voice of his chosen envoys. Calvin's stance of God's rapport to his creation especially accentuated all-embracing divine providence, but the fundamental assumption was as typical of Catholic and Lutheran positions as well.[569] Protestants were exceptionally inclined to observe signs and phenomena such as war, starvation, pestilence or aberrant weather, because they had disregarded the faculty of the saints to perform miracles and were keen to underscore the propinquity of divine power.[570] If, as we can now see, the Last Days did not enter into history at this point, significant changes were catastrophically engaged that would have dramatic corollaries for the political and personal future.

In '"He needs will be Absolute Milan": The Political Thought of *The Tempest*', Jeffrey Rufo suggests that 'the politics of *The Tempest* and plays like it are ambiguous, complex, intriguing, and at times mystifying. Performed in front of a royal audience, they walked a fine line between seemingly opposite ways of conceiving royal authority'.[571] While Prospero is the overwhelming authority on the island, he faces relentless challenges – transparently from Caliban but also from the intoxicated Trinculo and Stephano, as well as briefly from Ferdinand and (mildly) from Ariel and Miranda. Nonetheless, questions of authority, confrontation and opposition materialize throughout the drama, from its foundational and eponymous storm to the court party's dalliance with regicide. It is also apparent in the concluding scene's recommencement of Prospero's principality: Antonio's ostensibly rancorous acknowledgement, and the imminent successional marriage.

Early modern drama supplied ordinary people in England with a place where they could participate with group thinking about matters of social, religious and political interest. The theatre was able to offer new figures of public language, identity, dialogue and assessment, and was part of the continuing enlargement of the inclusive political identity, however idealised. In many ways the apocalyptic prospects of Shakespeare's time were realised, if not precisely in the fashion anticipated.

Apocalypses are about change or the anticipation of change, and *The Tempest* foregrounds the continuing development in attitudes to religio-political systems that had been ongoing since during the medieval period, and into the Renaissance, but which was also anticipated in the New Testament. It is both more elusive and more assertive than the other tragicomedies. For Steven Marx, both *The Tempest* and Revelation are closing visions of larger works, each suggesting the 'dissolution of heaven and earth [which] makes way for a new order, which is also a restoration',[572] reflecting the play's vagueness, in addition to its conclusiveness; for Marx, just as the Bible functioned for its commentators, *The Tempest* 'was the source of its own vindication.'[573]

In the New Testament, the public and ritualised elements of sacrifice and faith are properly assessed, are seen to be flawed and in opposition to the private realm of belief. Jesus proclaimed, 'the kingdom of God is within you'[574] when the disciples seemingly looked forward to a political revolution over their Roman masters; moreover, the new message was

---

[569] Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches, c. 1540-1620* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[570] For Luther, *et al.*, they were to be regarded as exemplars of moral and spiritual duty.

[571] Jeffrey A. Rufo, '"He needs will be Absolute Milan": The Political Thought of *The Tempest*', in *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, ed., Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2014), p. 137.

[572] Steven Marx, 'A Masque of Revelation: *The Tempest* as Apocalypse', in *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 140.

[573] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[574] Luke 17:21.

that prayers should be in secret, and for private rewards.[575] The New Testament, particularly as understood by the reformers, suggests that each individual has a personal relationship with God, and this rapport to all intents and purposes sanctions the individual in resistance to the conventional establishment. Dependence on God (ironically) makes one socially autonomous. Luther's scriptural learning yielded private faith and empowered him in his public hostility to the medieval priestly hierarchy, even if it is certainly far from true that believers saw – or experiences – the Reformation as an opportunity for liberation. Indeed, many lamented the the disruption and destruction to their traditional lives it wrought, as well as the bringing of absolutism in their political masters.

The Tempest stages – from first to last – questions of authority and the fundamental structure of society that were crucial to the changes wrought by this period. As he recounts the play's back-story Prospero tells his daughter it was 'Providence divine' (I.ii.159) that rescued them and delivered them to the island. Gonzalo, towards the drama's close, praises the 'gods … that have chalked forth the way / Which brought us hither' (V.i.201;203-4) Both Prospero and Gonzalo of course mean the Christian divinity, overseer of human events and provider of significance to history (and legal authority to political personages). This providence was an inextricably religious and political issue: King James maintained his power as sprung directly from God, and as such was irrefutable. Yet, when the Boatswain establishes the limits to regal power in the face of the storm, Shakespeare questions a religio-providentialist view of the state. The Epilogue comes to imply, even propose, a more communitarian concept of salvation that confronts Gonzalo's gaudy assertion for hierarchical processes of authority. Prospero informs us only we can recover him, so that the community of the audience – not a royal individual – becomes the ordnance of divine resolve. Prayer becomes a mutual soteriological pursuit for all, play-goers and play-makers:

> Gentle breath if yours my sails
> Must fill, or else my project fails,
> Which was to please. Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
> > As you from crimes would pardoned be,
> > Let your indulgence set me free.
> > > (Epilogue, 10-20)

Prospero, performing the role but with a meta-theatrical theological glance, asks for the listener's sanction and liberation. Prospero (as character, actor or authorial voice) prays for the stage parallel to salvation, analogous to the customary way of concluding a medieval mystery play, invoking a benediction for the audience. The speech's lexis hovers between theatrical and religious connotations ('mercy'; 'pardon'; 'indulgence') and theatre's capacity to generate a world terminates with an invocation of the Last Judgement, in which soteriological applauding or heckling to the dramatis personae of real life will be forthcoming.

---

[575] Matthew 6:6,14.

Sentence rests with the audience, and is qualified on their private and particular expectation of clemency and absolution projected onto the departing magus.

The drama's closing words contest the concept of passive capitulation to the Providence that is the basis of Gonzalo's speeches in the final scene, and instead accentuate the remuneration of dedicated, active prayer 'which pierces so that it assaults / mercy itself'. The words challenge authority, but remain even so, or even by definition, intensely and conventionally Christian, anchored in the epitome of a moral *community* that challenges oppression. As the world of the play disbands into the real world, at the boundary linking fiction and reality, Prospero pleads to be representationally liberated: he provokes a moral covenant in the form of the Lord's Prayer ('forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'). The lines also have an acutely Protestant quality, particularly if we see the word 'indulgence' converting the institutionalized Catholic habit of promoting 'indulgences' to those on the lookout for the easy remission of sins, into the virtue of shared amnesty and compassionate charity. As Gillian Woods has asserted: 'the audience's decision over whether or not to applaud the drama is playfully implicated in trying out a confessional attitude. Even so, the status of these "Catholic" terms as wordplay means that they only flirt with sectarian resonance, rather than declaring a theological message.'[576] Indeed, there is an inherent ambiguity to *The Tempest*'s epilogue, especially given the hyper-theatricality of the play. It interrogates the meaning for a post-Reformation audience to 'indulge' in symbolically 'Catholic' activities, and how a drama that presents absolution as an extraordinary brand of vengeance discusses moral disparity.

Prospero is, in the sacramental idiom of the epilogue, admitting his own requirement for absolution. Prospero is humble, deferential and *retiring* as he faces grace's altar. In his 1520 treatise *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther does not want Protestant communities to give up acknowledging their sins, but he sets the procedure within the communal association, not an exceptional confessor. For Luther, the Catholic confession furnished one more institutional and illicit command to those it should be attending. When Prospero declares his own transgressions and seeks clemency, he is verbalizing in religious language the shared community he has with those be sought to dominate. However, as Eamon Duffy has observed in *The Stripping of the Altars*,[577] Catholicism retained a devoted following in Protestant England – a flock still requiring priests. Yet, as we saw in chapter three, when Catholicism was permitted, it was a restrained Catholicism, a noiseless existence contained by the wider structures of the reformed state. A politically influential clergy could not fit into this framework. Like Prospero, they were obliged by events to adjust. If they intended to continue, they would have to exist within not above the community.

The Tempest stages the public discussion concerning whether subjects are justified in abiding by their religious doctrine rather than the directives of their ruler. In England in particular this was especially tested since for thirty years just before Shakespeare's birth the state religion altered numerous times, changing to and fro between Catholicism and Protestantism under Henry VIII and his progeny. Gonzalo mitigates regal obligation with his biblio-aid to Prospero and Miranda; he does not openly save them, betraying the kingly demands, but is able to assuage their affliction and odds of survival. His behaviour exposes the drama's careful, ambiguous, religio-politics: Prospero appreciates the decent councillor

---

[576] Gillian Woods, 'Indulgent Representation: Theatricality and Sectarian Metaphor in *The Tempest', Literature Compass* 11 (2014), p. 705.

[577] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

as 'Holy Gonzalo, honourable man' (V.i.62) for his combination of allegiance to his monarch and benevolence to his sovereign's adversary.

Allegorical versions of dubious activities among the social, religious and political elites of England and Europe, are also presented by the play. These were exactly the kinds of topic ordinary play-goers, beyond the court, were not permitted to witness – various Acts having, as we have seen, outlawed religion and politics from open discussion in the theatre. Ariel's song 'Where the bee sucks' (V.i.88-94) anticipates the spirit's emancipation from duty to Prospero, and is the kind of artificial courtly amusement theatre audiences were voracious to experience. Yet the outlook Ariel articulates is fundamentally equivalent to Caliban's more populist chant, 'Ban' ban' Ca-caliban', which ends with the refrain, 'Freedom, high-day; high-day, freedom; freedom, high-day, freedom' (II.ii.179,181-2). Prospero loathes Caliban as 'thou earth' (I.ii.315) and eulogizes Ariel for the spirit's facility as master of revels, but the same desire for liberty, autonomy and accomplishment dwells in both under the duke's rule.

The Tempest begins with a maritime storm creating a catastrophe which frankly establishes the dilemmas of authority, power and rule. The tempest of the title tests the hierarchical status quo and is a multi-layered allegory of culture, religion, and aesthetic determinacy. The competent, skilled crew are presented in contrast to the court, and have a confidence of meritocracy through their experience and proficiency. *King* Alonso and his aristocrats materialize in the chaos as haughty, fearful and absurd, reminding the Boatswain of the importance of the ship's passengers. Yet by interfering with the mariners,

> BOATSWAIN: You mar our labour – keep your cabins. You do assist the storm
> … When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers for the
> name of king? To cabin. Silence! Trouble us not.

> (I.i.12-13,15-6)

Storms, and by implication the divine, do not, it seems, care for the political order, and value is placed on knowledge rather than position. The Boatswain says to Gonzalo:

> You are a councillor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work
> the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority.
> If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long and make yourself ready in your
> cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. [*To the mariners*] Cheerly,
> good hearts. [*To the courtiers*] Out of our way. I say.

> (I.i.18-23)

The political elite are evidently powerless to 'command these elements to silence' (l.19), and so it is implied that human authority has no source in nature, an acknowledgment which straightforwardly challenges the structure of Renaissance political stability, and opposes contemporary theories of governance, whereby the King's influence was warranted by orientation to a cosmic directive together natural and divine. The 'roarers' or loud and violent waves are also a reference to unruly people,[578] known as 'roaring boys', so that there is a

---

[578] Cf. Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (c.1607-10), a fictionalized dramatization of the life of Mary Frith, known as 'Moll Cutpurse', a woman who had gained a reputation as a virago in the early 1600s. (The term 'roaring girl' was adapted from the slang 'roaring boy', which was applied to a young man who

metaphoric connection between the anarchy in nature and the disturbing of the social hierarchy in the Boatswain's speeches. Names and titles are not respected by the tempest, so that language too is by extension questioned: the essential human creation and means of communication – and the fundamental resource for a playwright – is seen to apparently escape its conventional control and consequence. The Boatswain highlights the indispensable relationship between representation and public/ political organization. The storm of the play's title and opening scene openly symbolizes the numerous and interconnected religious, political and social crises of the period.

The following scene problematizes this disturbance of social order by analysing Prospero's authoritative status with those around him, the nature of his powers, particularly his magical arts – and by implication the role of religion in this period. As Allen Debus has commented, there was a certain legitimacy to this: 'the student of nature might learn to acquire natural powers not known to others and thus astonish the populace, even though these powers were known to be God-given and available to all'.[579] Nevertheless, there have been qualms to the validity or virtuousness of Prospero's magic – not least, as we can see in relation to the darker art of Sycorax, but also the predominant religio-legal frameworks and attitudes of the time would have made it inherently dubious, as D'Orsay Pearson has piquantly contented.[580]

Miranda is aware of Prospero's powers ('If by your art, my dearest father, you have / Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them'[581]) and petitions her father to save the ship – but Prospero assures her that the wreckage is part of his plan:

>   Be collected;
> No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart
> There's no harm done …
>   No harm.
> I have done nothing but in care of thee – …
> The direful spectacle of the wrack which touched
> The very virtue of compassion in thee,
> I have with such provision in mine art
> So safely ordered, that there is no soul,
> No, not so much perdition as an hair[582]
> Betid to any creature in the vessel
> Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw sink. Sit down,
> For thou must now know farther.

>   (I.ii.13-16,26-33)

---

caroused publicly, brawled, and committed petty crimes.) See: James Knowles, ed., 'Scurrile Inventions and Illiterate Bricklayers: London and Popular Theatre', in *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. ix-xxi; Barry Reay, 'Popular Culture in Early Modern England' in Barry Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1985; London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 1-30.

[579] Allen Debus, *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* (1978; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 12-13.

[580] D'Orsay Pearson, '"Unless I be reliev'd by prayer": *The Tempest* in perspective', *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974), pp. 253-82.

[581] I.ii.1-2.

[582] An obvious play on the homophone 'heir'.

Thus the crisis of authority in the opening scene seems like a smokescreen, and has Prospero retain control throughout – yet he will renounce his magic at the play's end so clearly a more nuanced understanding of the changing nature of power and authority is under examination. Such authority is, as we will see, inseparable from questions of magic and religion.

The Tempest's second scene stages the back history of Prospero and Miranda's coming to the island and their relationship with Ariel and Caliban. Commencing his version of their past, Prospero asks his daughter, 'Canst thou remember / A time before we came unto this cell?' (ll.38-39), instantly answering without lingering for her response, 'I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not / Out three years old' (ll.40-41). But Miranda unswervingly disagrees with him: 'Certainly, sir, I can' (l.41), declaring her own self-determination and her personal, interior prospect of representation that releases to Prospero's 'the dark backward and abysm of time' (l.50).

As with the opening scene, the traditional structures of society (there, monarchy/ aristocracy; here, family) are troubled: Miranda autonomously asserts herself (as she will in her liaison with Ferdinand). She is not as meek, passive or submissive as she can often be rendered, even if she remains essentially the unblemished model of early modern femininity.[583] Certainly, Prospero's anxieties over whether she is listening or sleeping expose his concern as to the limitations of his authority. Prospero's continual remarks to his daughter are indicative of the drawback of his advancing years; but his age has a figurative component by alluding to a genuine predicament of authority: metaphorically there is a pressure between the artist/ audience and God/ believer, something heightened by the individualism of the Reformation.

Prospero's relationship with his two servants, Ariel and Caliban, is even more potent and dynamic than that with his daughter. 'Ariel' is likely to have a valuable significance for an early modern audience: 'Uriel' was John Dee's spirit-communicant for his ill-fated supernatural experimentation;[584] moreover, there are rich biblical resonances. Marginalia to Isaiah in the Geneva bible familiar to Shakespeare perceives that 'The Ebrewe worde Ariel signifieth the lyon of God, & signifieth the altar, because the altar seemed to devoure the sacrifice that was offred to God.'[585] Ariel is therefore a suitable designation for the magus's instrument that engineers a storm and vanishing dinner. The Bishop's Bible has Isaiah the prophet asserting that Jerusalem's altar 'shall be visited of the Lord of hostes with thunder, and shaking, and a great noyse, a whirlwind, and a tempest, and a flame of devouring fyre.'[586] There is a clear parallel to the language of both Revelation and *The Tempest*:

> ARIEL: Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin
>   I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide
>   And burn in many places – on the topmast,
>   The yards and bowsprit would flame distinctly
>
>   (I.ii.197-200)

---

[583] Ann Thompson, '"Miranda, where's your sister?": reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest*', in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers (Hempel Hempstead: Prentice Hall Publishing, 1991), pp. 45-55; 47.
[584] Glyn Parry, *The Arch Conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 132.
[585] Virginia Mason Vaughan & Alden T. Vaughan, eds., *The Tempest* (London: Thomson Learning, 2003), p. 27.
[586] *Ibid*., pp. 27-8.

Ariel and Prospero's relationship is built principally on a treaty of reciprocated arrangement: Prospero has liberated Ariel from internment, and Ariel has consented to attend Prospero for a set period of time, even if the extent that their affiliation necessitates an *enforced* covenant is awkward. Unlike Ariel, however, there is no affinity in Caliban's relationship with Prospero; the benefit is entirely Prospero's (and Caliban significantly has his personal account of events, where he is the lawful proprietor of the island). Such relationships are characterized by authority and exchange. Miranda and Prospero are not equal, for although she asserts her authority, he remains in charge throughout the play. With Ariel the rapport is mutually-beneficial with substantial give-and-take and some warmth if some occasionally aggressive intimidation, though through language not deeds. With Caliban, there is no reciprocity, no understanding about their shared history, and their association is distinguished by hostility and antagonism, both via Prospero's maltreatment and the attempted murder of Prospero by Caliban and his gang; thus, it can be said that Prospero has a measure of power over Caliban but no decisive authority. Prospero's dealings put to the test the restrictions and source of authority, because he is nonetheless a conventional sort of power who governs by the 'magic' of world order.

The Tempest has an important allegorical facet in these relationships: Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban symbolize the artist-priest-magician's audience. But they correspond to his audience specifically as individuals, not as embodiments of modes or ideals. That Prospero needs each of them to act out his plans exemplifies the fundamentally discursive nature of art and the collaborative spirit of drama, dependent on numerous positions and responsibilities, not least the audience's imagination. Curt Breight has argued that this audience – by existing outside Prospero's manipulation of characters and situations – are 'enabled to perceive Shakespeare's clever demystification of various official strategies within the discourse of treason. The audience is allowed to see that conspiracy is often a fiction, or a construct, or a real yet wholly containable piece of of social theatre.'[587] This Foucauldian interpretation has Prospero himself creating the treasonable plots and via his spy or infiltrator – Ariel – maintains reconnaissance on them, with the 'pinches' as understated varieties of state torture.

Todd Edmonson has persuasively argued for regarding Prospero as being a 'type of liminal or threshold figure – a priest … just as Prospero is presented to us as a character in flux between a former life and a future one, so the Roman Catholic priests of Shakespeare's England were also in flux.'[588] Like Prospero, he argues, the Catholic Church of Shakespeare's time 'faced the difficult proposition of negotiating between different types of power in such a way that it might be able to minister to its faithful, amidst a shifting understanding of the relationship between ecclesial authority and political influence.'[589] As Jeffrey Knapp has revealed, the theatre gave a framework where people could discuss these spiritual predicaments, players being able to go 'where the preachers could not follow'.[590] Thus, Edmonson argues, we might 'read the story of Prospero's journey as an analogue to the journey of Roman Catholic priests in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.'[591]

---

[587] Curt Breight, '"Treason doth never prosper": *The Tempest* and the discourse of treason', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990), pp. 1-28; 1.

[588] Todd Edmondson, 'Prospero's Exile and the Tempest of the English Reformation', *Religion and the Arts* 14 (2010), p. 253.

[589] *Ibid*., p. 254.

[590] Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 21.

[591] Edmondson, 'Exile', p. 255.

Even if we do not want to go so far as identify Prospero with the Catholic priests, clearly *The Tempest* stages the issues surrounding magic, religion and power.

For some time prior to Henry VIII's seeking of an annulment to his marriage, a popular anti-clerical/ anti-Catholic movement had been present: John Wycliffe and the fourteenth-century Lollards had energetically condemned the concept of priests as individuals in whom the authority of the Church, and even the potency of Christ, lay: those appointed to priesthood should not hold any exceptional rule over the laity. Moreover, even though the Medieval Church had formally forbidden the employment of magic by clergy and laity alike, as indicated by Keith Thomas, 'the roles of priest and magician were by no means clearly distinguished in the popular mind'.[592] The priest was knowledgeable, literate and held an aura before the uneducated laity due to his sanctification and his vital function in the phenomenon of the Mass.

All the way through the sixteenth century, reforming factions wished to eradicate any manifestation of magic in the Church, particularly the sacramental roles taken on by priests. To the reformers, they had abandoned their pastoral and communal purpose for an occupation that raised and disconnected them from their community. In addition, the religious power was seen as an incitement to take hold of political power too. The Reformation was, then, much concerned with power issues: its form and jurisdiction. Certainly both Prospero and the Roman Catholic clergy were compelled to face up to altering structures of power.

Prospero's own authority is most noticeably represented in and established through his magical arts. For Shakespeare's audience this magic is a focus for the play's explorations – examination carried out for the most part in religious terms. Thomas Blount, the English antiquarian and lexicographer born just after Shakespeare's death, described magic in his monumental *Glossographia; or, a dictionary interpreting the hard words of whatsoever language, now used in our refined English tongue* (1656), thus:

> *Magick Art* (magia) in general, is wisdom or contemplation of heavenly Sciences, and is two fold; Natural, which is lawful, and is the ground of all true Physick, and the occult wisdom of nature, without which all mans Reason and Knowledge is Ignorance; The other is Diabolical, superstitious and unlawful, and is called Necromancy: whereby men attain to the knowledge of things by the assistance of evil spirits.

A dualistic antagonism of good/ evil might appear to tender an appropriate recipe for *The Tempest* so that Prospero's 'good' magic is situated straightforwardly in opposition to the 'evil' magic of Sycorax's; however, 'the magical heritage of the Renaissance was exceedingly complex and … the distinctions between various types of magic had become blurred through frequent intermingling.'[593] However, there is a clear distinction between the kind of natural magic that consists of knowledge and the ability to bring about marvels, and darker activities.[594] Prospero is frequently regarded as a 'theurgist', practicing so-called 'white magic'

---

[592] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 274.

[593] Nicholas Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (1988; repr. London: Routledge, 2014), p. 134.

[594] There is a large quantity of literature on Prospero's magic. For a view of it as more or less benign, see: Barbara Howard Traister, *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1984) and John Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The*

that harnesses philosophy to energize either the gods or other useful spiritual intelligences in order to bring about extraordinary results. Against this is 'black magic' that generates disorder or irrational spirits. Clearly in many instances good/ evil is in the eye of the beholder, though the English Church and its leader James I condemned all magical practice: his dissertation on demonology had cautioned how the worship of 'secret studies' could set in motion the diabolic:

> For divers men having attained to a great perfection in learning, & yet remaining overbare (alas) of the spirit of regeneration and frutes thereof: finding all naturall thinges common, aswell to the stupide pedants as unto them, they assaie to vendicate unto them a greater name, by not onlie knowing the course of things heavenlie, but likewise to clim to the knowledge of things to come thereby. Which, at the first face appearing lawfull unto them, in respect the ground thereof seemeth to proceed of naturall causes onlie; they are so allured thereby, that finding their practize to proove true in sundry things, they studie to know the cause thereof: and so mounting from degree to degree, upon the slipperie and uncertain scale of curiositie; they are at last entised, that where lawfull artes or sciences failes, to satisfie their restless mindes, even to seeke to that black and unlawfull science of *Magic*.[595]

Hermeticists and neo-platonists saw 'natural magic' as the initial phase of an ambition to knowledge that rose by means of heavenly or astrological magic to ritual or religious magic. Prospero describes his actions as dedicated to the 'bettering of my mind' (I.ii.90), placing him as a white theurgist with Ariel as his agency to ritual magic. But this is precariously near to the shadowy arts of a diabolical motivation and Shakespeare carefully prevents Prospero's art from this smear: although he has many of the material signifiers of magic/ power (robe, staff, book), in his first scene he removes his vestment, assuring his daughter that the storm was merely an illusion; he does not conjure as such on stage and we see any magic via effect not exertion.

Certainly a number of stage and non-theatrical traditions are likely to have influenced Prospero's creation, from Marlowe's *Faustus* and Jonson's *The Alchemist*[596] to street 'juglers', yet within the play's religious context 'magic' has a clear role: the transformation of fallen human nature – Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio turn from a state of wickedness ('three men of sin'[597]) to a more elevated point of morality. Indeed, the distinction between the two forms of magic is erased in Prospero's speech of renunciation. As 'a human in a Christian world', Barbara Mowat argues, 'he must eventually admit the "roughness" of his magic'.[598]

Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). For the view that Shakespeare's contemporaries would have reproached Prospero's activities, see: D'Orsay Pearson, '"Unless I be reliev'd by prayer": *The Tempest* in perspective', *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974), pp. 253-82.

[595] James VI/ I, *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597), p. 10.

[596] First performed by the King's Men in 1611, the year before *The Tempest*'s first production, this satiric comedy stages the disapproving standpoint of magic articulated by James I. Jonson's play mercilessly renders magical routine as bogus and exposes this playwright's disdain for any form of occult knowledge; by contrast Shakespeare affords Prospero considerable triumph before his renunciation.

[597] III.iii.53.

[598] Barbara Mowat, 'Prospero, Agrippa, and hocus pocus', *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981), p. 290. Cf. Barbara Mowat, 'Prospero's book', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001), pp. 1-33.

Prospero's pronouncement to drown his book is directly preceded by his conversion from revenge and retribution to mercy and absolution.

Ariel's 'You are three men of sin' speech (III.ii.53-82) has Pauline resonances and Robert Hunter has suggested[599] that the banquet earlier in the same scene is a perverted rendering of the Eucharist, from which the Prayer Book reminded worshippers that sinners were excluded – hence its disappearing before the lords. Remembrance has importance, as we have seen, in all the tragicomic play's thematic concerns and structural frameworks, and *The Tempest* is no different. Ariel is adamant the Neapolitans: '… remember / (For that's my business to you)' (ll.68-9), and there is an intensity given the discourse over the process of sin and repentance in the post-Reformation era.

Sarah Beckwith's 2011 *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* looked at how the tragicomedies represent new types of exoneration, of resolution and of society in reaction to the change of the sacrament of penance throughout the English Reformation. For the Catholic traditions of late medieval England, the words of forgiveness were entwined with the custom of obligatory auricular admission and the priestly office of absolution. As a result, when the Reformers refuted the requirement for confession and discarded the rationale of absolution, they substituted one religious principle with another, but also stimulated a catastrophe in society's wider comprehension of forgiveness.

Beckwith expounds forgiveness in Shakespeare as inhabiting a doctrinal area somewhere between the binaries of Catholic and Reformed theology. She compares the connection linking absolution as an action and language in Shakespeare with the Catholic sacramental view, which maintains that language may bring about forgiveness 'magically outside of my particular contribution'; and the Reformed position, which separates the deed of forgiveness from human illustration in any manner, since 'it was only by eradicating all human mediations that we could be sure of the God-sidedness of grace'.[600] In Shakespeare, however, it is recognised that human dialogue itself that confirms or denies people's attachments. The Catholic stress on human agency is preserved, though it is not to be built upon an inherently efficacious sacramental mode. The Reformers' resolve for non-interceded rapport with God is discarded, at the same time as keeping their renunciation of the priest's authoritative role in arbitration. These complex and highly nuanced conceptions encapsulate the bewildering turmoil and catastrophe of post-Reformation England, in which enduring, time-honoured customs were eradicated by means of parliamentary *words*, before being hurriedly reinstated, ahead of being once again re-drained. Oaths of loyalty in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, the Book of Common Prayer's implementation of standardization of worship, and the reformers' prevailing polemical diminution of Catholic ceremony to a theatricalized and vacant formalism, 'all these contribute to an 'intrinsic denigration of expressive culture and of the human voice'.[601]

Beckwith's view of *The Tempest* discloses that an 'air of disappointment hangs over the ending of the play … because it is so unresolved … [and] it returns us to inescapably human

---

[599] Robert Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 234-5.

[600] Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 6.

[601] *Ibid*., p. 20. Beckwith's method is distant from Stephen Greenblatt's secularizing narrative where Shakespearean theatre cancels out religious faith only to engage its manner to drama, yet she does attribute the tragicomedies with a comparable religious theatricalization. Nonetheless, for Beckwith this dramatizing is mainly concerned with an appropriation of religious principles, not religious display/ ceremony, as Greenblatt argues.

horizons, and we long for more than these'.[602] Yet *The Tempest'*s ending is not appreciably more undecided than the other tragicomedies, which as we have seen correspondingly accentuate the earthly perspective of their engagements. Moreover, this does not deny the divine. Beckwith's view of the play's epilogue is worth citing more completely since it will be instructive to our discussion of *The Tempest'*s construction of time and conversion:

> The words of the actor pass over to the prayers of the audience and the mutual longing for a mercy necessary to all. Pardon comes not from a sovereign will but is granted from sinner to sinner in mutual acknowledgment, forgiving as we are forgiven. Only in this way, without enforcement, without enchantment, can art yield its good works.[603]

Beckwith then maintains that clemency occurs not from a sovereign will but is decided from sinner to sinner in shared recognition. Yet Prospero's flight from a deceptive faith in his own autonomous resolve is immediate with his acknowledgment of an additional one ('Mercy itself' – Epilogue, Line 18), a determination which is stimulated not only by Prospero's particular entreaty but also by the one propounded for him by the *human* society he has only just returned into. For Prospero absolution is not arranged from sinner to sinner so much as it is bestowed by a Mercy who reacts to their reciprocally intercessory petitions.

Let us now return to the role of Ariel and the Neapolitans in *The Tempest'*s processes of change. Memory, we saw, is crucial to the act of recovery: one must bring to mind trespasses perpetrated as the opening step in the practice of remorse, and this reminiscence is focused to God's benevolence in persuasive gratefulness, so that meticulous self-scrutiny is the introduction to atonement. Richard Hooker, the influential theologian who perhaps originated the Anglican *via media* between the extremes of Catholicism and Reformed Protestantism,[604] puts the point well:

> A generall perswasion that thou art a sinner, will neyther soe humble, or bridle thy soule: as if the catalogue of thy sinnes examined severally, bee continually kept in minde … The minde, I know, doth hardly admit such unpleasant remembrances, butt wee must force it, wee must constraine it thereunto.[605]

'All three of them are desparate: their great guilt, / Like poison given to work a great time after, / Now 'gins to bite the spirits'[606] says Gonzalo of the sinful trio when Ariel has compelled their memories. This is the equivalent course Hooker and other theologians contended where the recollection of transgression *per se* produced the internal gnawing of culpability and guilt, whether or not it was recognized or regretted. *Macbeth* is an entire play that explores this very conception in scrupulous detail: minds without sorrow are not without terror; sin creates anguish and desolation.[607]

Unlike the other three tragicomedies, dramatic time in *The Tempest* is stringently limited and vigilantly defined. For Frank Kermode, the structure of the play echoes the pattern

---

[602] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

[603] *Ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

[604] Michael Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600–1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[605] Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library Editions of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Georges Edelen, et al., 7 vols (Washington, D.C.: Folger Library, 1977), Vol III, p. 20.

[606] III.iii.105-7.

[607] Cf. Sandra Clark & Pamela Mason, 'Macbeth and time' in *Macbeth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 62-82.

established by Donatus, and continued by Terence: the first two acts disclose the conditions and advance the assorted machinations ('protasis'); the third act strengthens the instability ('epitasis'); the fourth act maintains the epitasis and prepares for the 'catastrophe' of the final act.[608] More than this, the structure is intimately connected to time, in a manner tantamount to the Reformation: the play defines a progress that characterizes a present predicament as it had evolved from the past and attains resolution only when the connection between past and present is exposed. The three-hour crisis of the play is in fact the crisis of a generation, embodying the transience of existence and the burden expeditious time makes on human life: 'the hour's now come' (I.ii.36), and there is a good deal to accomplish. The instant of the play's occurrence encompasses both historical time of Milan/ Naples and the magical time of the island/ Prospero's auspices, with the powers of the latter controlling the former to stabilize both time and community. Given the engineering of the plot by Prospero one might argue the only true crisis in the drama is the temporal one,[609] the conflict between past and present that defined the Reformation. Yet Prospero is not outside time and he must press forward to accomplish before his time expires: 'If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly'.[610]

When Ariel has spoken Prospero also importunes remorse, though at this point it is intimately bound up with the application of his magical powers – and, indeed, desire to enclose and confine those around him.[611] Prospero's magic has sought to hem in others, but has in fact served to isolate himself, imprisoning him from society. Only in the final scene, when Ariel confronts Prospero's absolutism, and the magus responds by acknowledging the mutual humanity he has with his adversaries, an acknowledgment which occasions the denunciation and dismissal of his magic:

> ARIEL: Your charm so strongly works 'em
> That, if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
>
> PROSPERO: Dost thou think so, spirit?
>
> ARIEL: Mine would, sir, were I human.[612]
>
> PROSPERO: And mine shall.
> 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 moved than thou art?
>
>   (V.i.17-24)

---

[608] Frank Kermode, ed., *The Tempest* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1961), pp. lxxiv-lxvi.

[609] See: Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 326-36.

[610] *Macbeth* I.vii.1-2

[611] The Neapolitans are to be 'all knit up / In their distractions' (III.iii.89-90); Ferdinand chained up: 'Come, / I'll manacle they neck and feet together' (I.ii.461-2); Ariel enclosed in a tree: 'If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters' (I.ii.295-6); Caliban, as befits Prospero's view of him as less than human, is to be isolated, accommodated as a porcine beast: 'here you sty me / In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me / The rest o'th' island' (I.ii343-44).

[612] 'Human' and 'humane' had interchangeable meanings at this time. Cf. I.ii.265, 284 & 346-7.

To be offered forgiveness is one thing; how one responds to this proposition is another. As should befit a king, Alonso performs the archetype of atonement by first recalling and then repenting his previous actions:

> Whe'er thou be'st he or no,
> Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me
> (As late I have been), I not know. Thy pulse
> Beats as of flesh and blood; and since I saw thee,
> Th'affliction of my mind amends, with which
> I fear a madness held me. This must crave –
> An if this be at all – a most strange story.
> Thy dukedom I resign and do entreat
> Thou pardon me my wrongs.
>
> (V.i.111-119)

This reimbursement of the dukedom, this repayment of what was taken is the full procedure of repentance required. At first Prospero is still angry, but once his daughter and Ferdinand are uncovered he is at last able to forget and disregard the past: 'Let us not burden our remembrances with / a heaviness that's gone',[613] liberating himself and the other Neapolitans from the unhelpful and injurious encumbrance of memory. There are a number of significant biblical parallels to this memory loss, perhaps most clearly in the letter to the Hebrews, traditionally ascribed to Paul:

> For this is the Testament that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws in their mind, and in their heart I will write them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and I will remember their sins and their iniquities no more. In that he saith a New Testament, he hath abrogated the old. Now that which is disannulled and waxed old, is ready to vanish away.[614]

Yet Prospero acknowledges he needs a celestial amnesia as well, so that he does not equate himself with God, and recognises his own culpability. If the distant usurpation is to be forgotten, the more recent attempted coup is less easy to forgive. Antonio and Sebastian's malicious intentions are only absolved with a struggle, and they are not to be forgotten upon the return home, for they remain a potential source of harm. Much can depend on the *staging*, rather than the play's language as to how far one see Antonio as repenting his actions and becoming united with his brother Prospero. The potential for sentimentality and cliché is rife. Yet there is unambiguously in the text no *verbal* sign of Antonio's repentance, and in the post-Reformation environment this is surely significant.

In order to fully comprehend the repentance/ forgiveness of Antonio, and the absence of his verbalising it, we must return to earlier in the final scene, when Prospero sees a way forward and a process to awaken the Neapolitans to grace:

---

[613] V.i.199-200.
[614] Hebrews 8:10-13

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.

<div align="right">(V.i.25-32)</div>

Even if this address is pervaded with the language of the confessional, Prospero all the same recognises his own universal humanity with his detractors. He does not refute their sin, but he is persuaded to absolve them not as a ruler over them, but as friend and brother. Converted and reconciled, his exile can come to a close and he may re-enter the community.

As we saw, Alonso meets Prospero's stipulation and solicits mercy; Antonio and Sebastian stay voiceless, but could point to penitence by gesture or, on the other hand, their hush could specify continued insubordination. Yet, Prospero's words evoke the Anglican Church's Matins/ Evensong prayers (also known of course as the Morning and Evening Prayer), the central daily office prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer and other Anglican liturgical texts. Unlike the Eucharist, these prayers can be led by a layperson, and indeed were often recited in private. Following recitations from the Bible, the Morning Prayer pronounced:

Derely beloved Brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sondry places, to acknowledge and confesse our manifolde sinnes and wickednes, and that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of almighty God our heavenly father, but confesse them with an humble, lowly, penitent and obedient harte to the ende that we may obtaine forgevenes of the same by his infinite goodnesse and mercie. And although we ought at all tymes humbly to knowledge our synnes before God, yet ought we moste chiefly so to doe, when we assemble and mete toguether, to rendre thankes for the greate benefites that we have received at his handes, to sette furth his moste worthie praise, to heare his moste holye worde, and to aske those thynges whiche be requisite and necessarie, aswel for the bodye as the soule. wherfore I praye and beseche you, as many as be here presente, to accompany me wyth a pure harte and humble voice, unto the throne of the heauenly grace, saying after me.

A generall confession, to be saide of the whole congregacion after the minister, knelyng.

Almightie and most merciful father, we have erred and straied from thy waies, lyke lost shepee we have folowed to much the devises and desires of our owne hartes. We have offended against thy holy lawes: We have left undone those thinges whiche we ought to have done, and we have done those thinges which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us, but thou, O Lorde, have mercy upon us miserable offendours. Spare thou them O God, whiche confesse their faultes. Restore thou them that be penitent, accordyng to thy promises declared unto mankynde, in Christe Jesu

our Lorde. And graunt, O most merciful father, for his sake, that we may hereafter lyve a godly, ryghtuous, and sobre life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.[615]

The Reformation changed procedures and attitudes to forgiveness by removing from the Protestant priest the authority to decree or bequeath exoneration upon a congregation/ individual. Only God could provide this obligation through grace. Prospero is able to recognise the limits he shares with a priest in establishing the circumstances for mercy; rather, he is obliged by a different requirement to pardon unreservedly and infinitely.[616] Prospero sees the humanity in both his enemies and himself, and so at last can be rid of his magical powers:

> 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 bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
> And twixt the green sea and the azured 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-based promontory
> Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
> The pine and cedar; graves at my command
> Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
> By my so potent art. But this rough magic
> I here abjure, and, when I have required
> Some heavenly music[617] – 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.
>   (V.i.33-57)

The spirits and elves he calls to mind are remnants from the past; he evokes them communally, as essential to the structures of the world and society, the equivalent hierarchical organization which lies beneath his art and authority, and by association some of the (unreformed) elements to religion. Their autonomous deeds are in essence light-hearted and whimsical: making 'midnight mushrooms', rejoicing in night-time carousing, and so forth.

---

[615] From the 1559 text, 'The ordre where morning and Evening prayer shalbe used and sayde', in Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 103-4.

[616] Cf. Isaiah 43:25-26; Daniel 9:9; Matthew 6:14-15; John 1:9; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:17.

[617] Cf. *Pericles* V.i.226

There is a sense that this mirrors the art and faith of a previous time. Art is distinguished as rough or violent magic so that the stratified organization of the world suggests a definite hostility. The remarkable miraculous showings are dubiously paranormal and against nature displaying an infringement of the usual and expected stability and regulation, signifying that with *The Tempest* they have a fundamental ambivalence. The demise of Prospero's magic is to be regarded as not only conclusive but also potentially apocalyptic: the drowning of the book and breaking of the staff indicate an ending that is irrevocable and without restoration.

The metaphor of Shakespeare/ Prospero's art is severely limited by the more crucial connection of Prospero's magic and its renunciation to forgiveness and community. Throughout the Renaissance, art was more often than not validated by its faithfulness both to the natural world and its ethical serviceability.[618] The contemporary frequency of apologetic prologues and epilogues, not least in Shakespeare's works, hints that the artist was an exposed and vulnerable personage – easy to misinterpret, or as we have commonly seen, be attacked from multiple sides of the religious debate. The occasion for Prospero's speech concerning the end of his art is his abrupt recollection of 'that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life',[619] so that it anticipates the connection between the rejection of Prospero's magic with his ability to forgive the various conspirators on the island, past and present.

As we saw at the start of this chapter, the oration is most traditionally taken as metaphorical for Shakespeare's own retirement from the theatre – yet the playwright had almost five more years to live when *The Tempest* was first produced in 1611, and in the coming years would collaborate with John Fletcher on *Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the now lost *Cardenio*: if any caution against exaggerating the metaphor were needed, this is surely it.[620] Shakespeare's *corpus* incessantly cogitates upon itself and represents a thoughtful and comprehensive investigation of the significance, function, and confines of Renaissance art and poetics. Prospero's celebrated elegies on his creative profession are vital testimonies, especially since unlike Sidney or Jonson Shakespeare left no non-fictional aesthetic declarations, but they have a dramatic context that attaches them crucially to Reformation ideas on forgiveness and community. Prospero abruptly ends the wedding masque; Ferdinand notices 'some passion / … works him strongly' (IV.i.143-4); Miranda concurs 'Never till this day / Saw I him touched with anger so distempered' (ll.144-5). Prospero reassures them with an explanation:

> You do look, my son, in a moved sort,
> As if you were dismayed. Be cheerful sir.
> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And – like the baseless fabric of this vision –
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,

---

[618] Cf. '[T]he purpose of playing is … to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (*Hamlet* III.ii.20-24).
[619] IV.i.139-41.
[620] Reflecting on the relationship between age, art and life is of course something Shakespeare has been doing since at least *As You Like It* in 1599, with Jacques' 'All the world's a stage' speech. See main text, below.

> And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vexed;
> Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled.
> Be not disturbed with my infirmity.
>
> (IV.i.146-160)

The Tempest embodies declining iconoclasm while simultaneously venerating imaginative potential and realisation. This catastrophic revelation provides a perspective on the dignity and energy of aesthetic endeavour: 'The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, / The solemn temples, the great globe itself' (l.152-3) explicitly unites the competing centres of art, religion, politics, fiction and actuality through the affirmation of the wonders of the 'real' world, comparing them to the 'baseless fabric of this vision' (l.151) – the masque we have just witnessed. The similes here are profoundly ambiguous and confirmed by syntactic uncertainty: are the listed towers, palaces, temples to be regarded as additional illustrations of the baseless masque, or are they that which is being compared? The masque is said to have 'melted into air, into thin air' (l.150);[621] the buildings 'shall dissolve, / And like this insubstantial pageant faded / Leave not a rack behind' (l.54-6), so that the comparison is intensely vague. Magus and playwright, creators both, concede that art is unavoidably artifice: the authority of any individual creation or style is neither essential nor universal, but provisional and functional.

As with Jacques' celebrated 'All the world's a stage'[622] and Macbeth's 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player'[623] speeches, Prospero ties art to existence itself: 'We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep' (ll.156-8). Jacques' fêted discourse (employing both classical and medieval sources) operates as a centre for the play's self-consciousness about theatrical presentation *and* as an implied vindication of plays against their critics, whether religious or otherwise. Macbeth uses the same metaphor for a darker view of being and time, inevitably given the state of affairs he confronts at the play's end. For Prospero, there is the option that our existence shares particular indispensable features with art judged as deception. Humanity, religion (especially in Reformed theology), and the drama, are characterized by their aptitude for, and concern with, language: there is an inter-related sanctity to them all. Yet, language is also an illusion, a linguistic token, not the thing itself: all are produced by humanity's mimetic propensity, which can nonetheless be transcended (particularly to engage with the divine).

As we noted earlier, the juncture for Prospero's 'sermon' is his impulsive recollection of 'that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life'. His response appears disproportionate: Ariel keeps them under surveillance; Prospero himself knows of the plot; a more incompetent assemblage of conspirators could scarcely be envisaged. Yet this is more than the contingency of the Caliban-Trinculo-Stephano alliance or the frustrations and angers of an old man. Here the metaphors of the temporality and vulnerability of the artist are insufficient for they fail to fully acknowledge the potency of Prospero's rejection of his art with his capacity to absolve and reintegrate. The Caliban

---

[621] Reminiscent of the weird sisters' vanishing 'Into the air; and what seemed corporal, / Melted, as breath into the wind' (*Macbeth* I.iii.81-2).
[622] *As You Like It* II.vii.140-67.
[623] *Macbeth* V.v.16-27

intrigue is a comic prophesy of the more significant Alonso-Antonio one to come, and the origins of the plot in II.ii have important reverberations with post-Reformation religious activities in England – particularly with regard to oaths and the Prayer Book.[624]

The question of what represents a religious ritual is an intensely – if not exclusively – early modern and post-Reformation one. Nevertheless, Protestantism is not reticent to ceremony or rite; it is decidedly self-conscious about physical connotation so that processes and entities linked to ritual could shrewdly transform as the procedure of the Reformation continued. The role of books is an especially prominent example from the period. The conspiratorial trio of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano will farcically, if gently, ridicule a widespread biblio-based practice. The ritual of 'kissing the book', as Brian Cummings has pointed out, was a pre-Reformation ceremony in legal contexts, regularly utilized in the official inauguration of contracts and bonds, but also as a familiar pledge of allegiance. As iconoclasm spread through the first part of the Reformation, the practice began to be mistrusted, in particular on account of its correlation to the physical actions of the priest during the mass, lifting the Bible and osculating it prior to the elevation of the host. Yet the custom not only endured such scepticism, it augmented its status by indicating several particularly Protestant matters of interest, at variance with the stereotypical view of Protestants as artefact-fearing haphephobes:

> Touching the holy book acted as a taboo on the witness, attesting to his seriousness in allowing the touch of his fingers and lips on the Bible to make his body liable. The bodily gesture was also a signal of the public and formal nature of the contract, a sign or token of completion. Both of these processes could be taken as registers of internalization, a general assimilation of ritual with proofs of faith or witness. More mysteriously or magically, however, the holiness of the book was transmitted from its contents to the physical artefact. In this sense internalization is accompanied by renewed externalization. Protestants commonly held their physical books in reverence, decorated them with elaborate bindings, or kept them on the person in times of crisis.[625]

The book's sanctity was also conveyed from the words it contained into the corporal object, so that the space between word and meaning was continually traversed. The weight and import of this carries through the comic rituals of *The Tempest*, when Caliban is compelled to pledge his allegiance to the inebriated Trinculo and Stephano, his latest sovereign:

> CALIBAN: I'll swear upon that bottle to be thy true subject, for the liquor is not earthly.
>
> STEPHANO: Here, swear then how thou escaped'st.
>
> TRINCULO: Swum ashore, man, like a duck. I can swim like a duck, I'll be sworn.

---

[624] Brian Cummings, 'Shakespeare and the Reformation', 2012 address to the British Academy, London. An audio recording and draft text of the lecture is available at: http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2012/Cummings-shakespeare.cfm. Accessed: 4th March 2017.

[625] *Ibid*., p. 9.

> STEPHANO: Here, kiss the book. [*Trinuclo drinks*] Though thou canst swim like a duck, thou art made like a goose.

> TRINCULO: O Stephano, hast any more of this?   (II.ii.122-130)

'Hast thou not dropped from heaven?' (l.134) Caliban affirms piously and he is obligated to substantiate his spiritual conversion by the 'sacrament' of the new ceremony:

> CALIBAN: I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee!
> My mistress showed me thee, and thy dog and thy
>   bush.

> STEPHANO: Come, swear to that. Kiss the book. I will furnish it anon with new contents. Swear!
> [*Caliban drinks*.]
>
>   (II.ii.137-140)

This is more than mere mockery, or what Stephen Greenblatt has characterized as an emptying of ceremonial solemnity: physical presentation is a fundamental component to the tragicomedies even and especially when they are being humorous or parodist. Moreover, the kissing of the book/ bottle episode and later final scene of absolution draw attention to 'the way that bodily ritual is made all the more burdensome by its association with internal proof tests'.[626] Post-Reformation pledges of faithfulness and loyalty to the Church and State were a regular endorsement of each new parliamentary act, emphatically adamant of ritual as external mark of observation and witness. The repeated stage directions, rare in early modern drama, in the book/ bottle kissing scene suggest the nearness to and importance of gesture to ritual, and the lexis of human actions to match and communicate the emotions we experience – those of both the performers and onlookers.[627] This connects ordinary events with both the world of religious experience and that of a theatre audience, so that contribution is not merely passive and replicatory but active and participatory: psycho-somatic transformations take place within both ecclesiastical and theatrical services. Yet this is more than a Greenblattian emptying of ritual gravity: rites exist throughout competing spheres of reality; ritual is invention and performance, creation and interaction, execution and observation.

    As we saw earlier, there is a similar evocation of the words of the Morning/ Evening Prayers in the Reformed Anglican service in Prospero's 'They being penitent' speech at the beginning of the final scene, so that again Shakespeare transfers a topical religious debate into dramatic form. Prospero recognises that his human virtue is to be humane,[628] and to forgive without proviso or restriction. This sanctions Prospero's individual victory over the impulse for retaliation, and his magnanimous awareness of the transience even of kings and

---

[626] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[627] See: Farah Karim-Cooper & Tiffany Stern, eds., *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare Library, 2013); Andrew Gurr & Farah Karim-Cooper, eds., *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), espec. Ch. 5 'The Staging', pp. 209-57; Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[628] In this period, the words had transposable spellings. Cf. V.i.20 and I.ii.265, 284 & 346-7.

dukes, and an eminent corrective to the absolutism that was already threatening Europeans nations. Moreover, if kings are divinely ordained, they must also act in a godly and honourable manner. If Prospero retires to the island from the dukedom to 'better' his mind, he withdraws home to ponder his mortality, but also to look to the future:

> PROSPERO: Sir, I invite your highness and your train
> To my poor cell, where you shall take your rest
> For this one night, which (part of it) I'll waste
> With such discourse as, I not doubt, shall make it
> Go quick away – the story of my life,
> And the particular accidents gone by
> Since I came to this isle - and in the morn
> I'll bring you to your ship, and so to Naples,
> Where I have hope to see the nuptial
> Of those our dear-beloved solemnized;
> And thence retire me to my Milan, where
> Every third thought shall be my grave.
>
> ALONSO: I long
> To hear the story of your life, which must
> Take the ear strangely.
>   (V.i.301-314)

Amid this exchanging of stories, the eventual revelation Prospero acknowledges is the absolute constraint upon absolute power which his magic had tried to recapture and control. He looks to the future as confirmed by the uniting of the rival realms through matrimony: 'dear-beloved solemnized' calls to mind the Anglican marriage ceremony:

> Dearely beloved frendes, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of his congregacion, to joyne together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable state, instytuted of God in Paradise, in the time of manes innocencie, signiflyng unto us the mistical union that is betwixt Christ and his Churche: which holy state Christe adourned and beautified with his presence and firste myracle that he wrought in Cana of Galile, and is commended of sainct Paul to be honourable emong all men, and therfore is not to be enterprised, nor taken in hande unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, to satisfye mennes carnall lustes and appetytes, lyke brute beastes that have no understandyng ; but reverently, discretely, advisedly, soberly, and in the feare of God, duely consideryng the causes for the which matrimony was ordeined.[629]

The Tempest marries the classical unities and the defiantly unclassical tragicomic form, but there is also a depth to its understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the secular/ profane in human language and conduct. The language of religion, and its representations in magic or miracle, cannot be ignored in any thoroughgoing evaluation of Shakespeare's tragicomic plays. They vigorously connect with religious forms of contrition

---

[629] Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1559 form, p. 157.

and compassion, as well as gauging authority and its confines, stimulating a variety of creative dialogues on the catastrophic changes that the Reformation wrought, even as these adjustments were the opportunity for new communities and occasions for heightened faith.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to disclose Shakespeare's skill in subtly abstracting the religious issues of the age within his crafted worlds. We have seen how secular dramas set in a variety of spatio-temporal loci retain, indeed repeatedly endorse and stimulate, the religious language, signals, ideas, tensions and concerns of the post-Reformation period, especially as it occurred in England. This thesis did not endeavour to indiscriminately imprint religious ideas and principles upon Shakespeare's work. Rather, it strove to understand more fully the relationship between Shakespearean drama and the religion of the post-Reformation era.

We distinguished the plentiful engaging figurations of specific and common religious beliefs in Shakespeare's plays, and aimed to discuss Shakespeare as a potentially religious writer in a commodious fashion, as a dramatist who was engrossed by the demands, paradoxes and interrogations of the period, and a playwright unusually diligent to the ethical, political and ontological features and repercussions of the post-Reformation disruptions. As clarified in the introduction, it has inspected instants and entireties in Shakespeare's plays not only to disclose the intellectually instructive mutuality between Shakespeare's drama and religion, but correspondingly to advance renewed interpretations of specific tragicomic texts.

Following an examination of previous readings of the tragicomedies, as well as an exposition of the nature and interaction of the church and theatre both before and after the Reformation, this study revealed developing and changing religious tensions, concepts and questions in the early modern period. Drawing upon a diversity of instances from an assortment of sources, the methodological approach implemented by this dissertation occasioned the management of Shakespeare's dramas as religiously receptive texts/ stage works, fertile in theological, political and social import, blurring and examining the connections and boundaries between such intersected categories of human life.

This thesis investigated the distinctive brands of religious thinking in *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, three plays that are excellent examples of the penetration, extent, refinement and subtlety of Shakespeare's religious interests. While I have concentrated on these plays, I have – where applicable – employed other plays to convey Shakespeare's religiosity more completely. From this, it became clear, as others such as Gillian Woods and Alison Shell have shown, that it pervades most of his work, not as an evangelical enthusiasm but an intellectual-emotional dynamism. (Discussions on the nature and character of contemporary collaboration between dramatists – a burgeoning area of modern research – also restricted our perception of the biographical element to Shakespeare's religiosity, instead promoting its functionality for topical, multivalent drama created by several personalities.)

In order to present a thorough exploration of particular dramas, I have had to be discriminating in my selection of both Shakespeare's plays and religious texts. Nevertheless, my selections have been far from capricious: instead of conveniently fitting corresponding religious material onto the plays, I have been more concerned in the propagation of diverse forms of religion internally, within the dramas themselves. Taking perceptions of religious thought in certain works, I endeavoured to make use of sections from religious works – both contemporary or 'historical' texts – that reverberate with those plays, to contest dynamically and diagnostically with both corpora of writing.

At numerous junctures in the research, I have cited extracts from religious literature (often incorporating legal and/ or political texts) to elucidate more effusively the concepts and opinions they share, and to disclose the intellectual affiliation (potentially as both camaraderie and enmity) that subsists amongst early modern secular dramas and religious contemporaries or antecedents.

As we have seen in the methodology of this paper, it is challenging for any contemporary drama to prevaricate religious connections or connotations. A decisive conclusion of this dissertation is an amplified consciousness of the pervasiveness and inescapabilty of religious thought in Shakespeare's works. Continually, his oeuvre gives the impression of being occupied by interrogations approaching the condition and predicament of religion in the world.

This thesis has made an implicit assertion about the curious, frequently paradoxical relationship between the ostensibly narrow or submerged religious interests of Shakespeare's plays (often concealed for a combination of legal, aesthetic, and potentially personal reasons) and his broader, lasting esteem as a 'world' dramatist, shunning the historical and/ or spatial distances between our age/ place and his. It has maintained that Shakespeare's assiduous, collective attractiveness as a playwright in particular is connected to his noteworthy dexterity in staging the incessant topics of faith, especially concerning time, agency and action, and their numerous attendant quandaries. In short, the persistence of religion's questions (and prospective answers) frequently remain the same as our own, local variances or transitory incidentals notwithstanding.

The subtle, restrained weaving of religious material into his texts has sublated them to the twenty-first century and/ or international audience; but it has also bequeathed them more persistence and breadth than a crasser, or at least more superficial, employment might have done. Indeed, through examining these *religious* conflicts and tensions we can better comprehend many of our own anxieties – doctrinal, spiritual, secular, atheistic, agnostic, indifferent, or otherwise. The post-Reformation apprehensions are not fabulously inaccessible or remotely autonomous to their own time, but are absorbed and involved in the perpetuation of history and our own place within it. Religion is not a deceased or obsolete attitude of the past; it endures to apprise both literature and criticism as well as political thought and human engagement with the world.

So the chief objective of this exploration has been to deliver a renewed interpretation of the procedure and practice of religion in Shakespearean drama, seen through the lens of three late tragicomic plays, a hybrid form that provided a pertinent instrument for such an activity. In *Pericles*, we observed that Shakespeare is intensely fascinated in fundamental issues about the nature of time and history; through the play's penetrating deliberation of inheritance and continuity, Shakespeare quizzes the interior incongruities, opacities, and rigidities of human periodization, particularly in relation to post-Reformation assertions. In *The Winter's Tale*, we distinguished an aesthetic capable of examining eschatological and political implications, whilst in *The Tempest* we saw how authority and jurisdiction were pressured and probed by upheaval and opportunity.

As a cultural system of behaviours and beliefs, religion is founded on the significance of reciprocal recognition and a profound consideration of the individual's commitments to other(s), both human and divine. By presenting his audience with dramatic arrangements connected not exclusively with particularized self-promotion but by a regard for (and acknowledgement of) others, Shakespeare makes available the conception of humans as fluctuating, unpredictable beings – the ideal candidates in fact for a play's *dramatis personæ*.

Moreover, by conjoining moral and metaphysical attitudes with subjectivity, human spectacle, agency and action, the dramas command more from us than a mere contextualising of early modern religion: they invite us to transform and transcend ourselves and our own situations. Yet they force nothing on us, instead encouraging – sometimes tempting – us to make up our own minds. Whatever integrity and security his own faith might have had, as a dramatist Shakespeare is the great sceptic and dialectician, in the sense that he deliberately raises more questions than answers about the human condition. We must be too, as responsive, responsible recipients and exponents of his work.

Bibliography

Contemporary study on Shakespeare unavoidably involves operating with numerous published versions of his work, and this thesis is no different. However, unless stated otherwise, the following play editions have been used.

The Arden Shakespeare: The Complete Works, edited by Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan & Richard Proudfoot (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

Pericles, edited by Suzanne Gossett (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

The Winter's Tale, edited by John Pitcher (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

The Tempest, edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan & Alden T. Vaughan (1999; revised version, London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

A variety of Bibles, such as the Geneva (1560) and Bishop's (1568), are necessarily employed throughout this thesis; however, all biblical references, unless stated otherwise, cite the King James Bible of 1611.

The Bible: Authorised King James Version, edited by Robert Carroll & Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Adelman, Janet, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Altieri, Charles, 'Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*: a cautionary account of epistemic criticism', in John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer & Luca Pocci, eds, *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, trans. & ed. Antony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. & ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. E. Barker, ed. R.F. Stalley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Arnold, Catharine, *Globe: Life in Shakespeare's London* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

Asquith, Clare, *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (London: Perseus Books, 2005).

Baillie, William, '*Henry VIII*: A Jacobean History', *Shakespeare Studies* 2 (1979).

Barber, C.L., '"Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget": Transformation in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969).

Barclay, J.M.G., 'Grace within and Beyond Reason: Philo and Paul in Dialogue', in P. Middleton, A. Paddison & K.L. Wenell (eds), *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011).

Barker, Francis, *The Culture of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

Barker, Francis & Hulme, Peter, '"Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish": The Discursive Contexts of *The Tempest*', John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Barthes, Roland, '*La mort de l'auteur*', in *Image Music Text* (1977; New York City, NY: Fontana Press, 1993).

Barton, Anne, ed., *The Tempest* (London: New Penguin Shakespeare, 1968).

Barton, Anne, 'The One and Only', *The New York Review of Books*, 11th May 2006.

Bartrum, G., *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy* (London: British Museum Press, 2002).

Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Bate, Jonathan, 'Origins – Authorship' in *Titus Andronicus* (London: Arden Shakespeare, A & C Black, 1995).

Bate, Jonathan, 'Shakespeare and Jacobean Geopolitics', in *Soul of the Age* (London: Viking Press, 2008).

Battenhouse, Roy, ed., *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension: An Anthology of Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

Beauregard, David N., *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

Beckwith, Sarah, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Bell, John, *Bell's British Theatre* (1796).

Benson, Sean, 'The Resurrection of the Dead in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*', *Renascence* 61:1 (2008).

Benson, Sean, *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Raising the Dead* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press Medieval and Renaissance Literary Studies, 2009).

Benson, Sean, Review of Adam Max Cohen, *Wonder in Shakespeare* (London: Palgrave, 2012), in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63:3 (2012).

Bentley, G.E., 'Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre', *Shakespeare Survey* 1 (1948).

Berger, Peter, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

Bergeron, David, *Shakespeare's Tragicomedys and the Royal Family* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1985).

Bethell, S.L., *The Winter's Tale: A Study* (London: Staples Press, 1947).

Bicks, Caroline, 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the churching of women', in: *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Biggins, Dennis, '"Exit pursued by a Beare": A Problem in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 23 (1962).

Billington, Sarah, *Mock Kings in Medieval and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Bliss, Lee, ed., *Coriolanus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Boddy, G.W., 'Players of interludes in North Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications Journal* 3 (1976).

Boehrer, Bruce T., *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England: Literature, Culture, Kinship, and Kingship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

Boitani, Piero, *The Gospel According to Shakespeare*, trans. Montemaggi and Jacoff (Notre Dame, IA: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

Bray, John, 'Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination', *Church History* 41 (4: 1972).

Breight, Curt, '"Treason doth never prosper": *The Tempest* and the discourse of treason', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990).

Bristol, M.D., 'In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economics in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991).

Brook, V. J. K., *A Life of Archbishop Parker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

Brooks, Harold, '*The Tempest*: what sort of play?' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London: British Academy Press, 1980; repr. 2009).

Brooks-Davies, Douglas, *The Mercurian Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

Brotton, Jerry, '"This Tunis, sir, was Carthage": contesting colonialism in The Tempest', in Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (eds), *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Browne, Herman, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II, 2004).

Brydon, Michael, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker: An Examination of Responses, 1600–1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Bueler, Lois E., 'The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama', *Renaissance Drama* XV (1984), Leonard Barkan, ed., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1984).

Burrow, Colin, ed., *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2008).

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Campbell, Thomas, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols (1834).

Caraman, Philip, *The Western Rising 1549: The Prayer Book Rebellion* (Tiverton: Westcountry Books, 1994).

Cavell, Stanley, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (1987; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Chambers, E.K., *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930).

Charnes, Linda, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Clark, Sarah, '*Macbeth* and Time', in *Macbeth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Clubb, Louise G., 'The Tragicomic Bear', *Comparative Literature Studies* 9 (1972).

Clulee, Nicholas, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (1988; repr. London: Routledge, 2014).

Coghill, Nevill, 'Six Points of Stage-Craft in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958).

Como, David, 'Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Early Seventeenth-Century England', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier, eds, *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000).

Cooper, Helen, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Cooper, Helen, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Publishing, 2010).

Corbin, P. & D. Sedge, D., eds, *The Oldcastle Controversy: Sir John Oldcastle, Part I and the Famous Victories of Henry V* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

Corrie, George Elwes, ed., *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer: Sometime Bishop of Worcester, Martyr 1555* (London: Classic Reprints, 2015).

Cottret, Bernhard, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids & Edinburgh: William B. Eerdemans, 2000).

Cox, John, 'Shakespeare's Religious and Moral Thinking: Skepticism or Suspicion?', *Religion and Literature* 36:1 (2004).

Cox, John, *Seeming Knowledge: Shakespeare and Sceptical Faith* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007).

Craig, John, 'Psalms, Groans and Dog-Worshippers: The Soundscape of Worship in the English Parish Church, 1547-1642', in Andrew Spicer & Will Coster, eds, *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Crawforth, Hannah, Dustagheer, Sarah, & Young, Jennifer, eds, *Shakespeare in London* (London: Arden Publishing, 2015).

Cressy, David, *Birth, Marriage & Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Cruz, Anne & Suzuki, Mihoko, *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

Cummings, Brian, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Cummings, Brian & Simpson, James, eds, *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Cummings, Brian, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Cummings, Brian, 'Shakespeare and the Reformation', May 2012 address to the British Academy, London. (An audio recording and draft text of the lecture is available at: http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2012/Cummings-shakespeare.cfm.)

Cummings, Brian, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Cunningham, Andrew, & Grell, O.P., *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Curran, Kevin, *Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

Curren-Aquino, Deborah T., ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Dailey, P., *The Book of Common Prayer: Past, Present, Future* (London: Continuum Press, 2011).

Daniell, David, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (London: Yale University Press, 2001).

Dawson, Anthony B. & Minton, Gretchen E., eds, 'The question of collaboration' in *Timon of Athens* (London: Cengage Learning, 2008).

Debus, Allen, *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* (1978; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

DelVecchio, Doreen & Hammond, Antony, eds, 'Authorship' in *Pericles* (Cambridge: New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1998).

Dever, M. E., *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 2004).

Diehl, Huston, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Diehl, Huston, '"Strike all that look upon with marvel": Theatrical and Theological Wonder in *The Winter's Tale*', in Bryan Reynolds and William N. Nest, eds, *Rematerializing Shakespeare: Authority and Representation on the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Dollimore, Jonathan, 'Introduction: Shakespeare, cultural materialism and the new historicism', in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (1985; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

Dollimore, Jonathan, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (3rd Edition: Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004).

Dollimore, Jonathan, 'Afterword' to *Spiritual Shakespeares*, ed. Ewan Fernie (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Doran, Susan, & Durston, Christopher, *Princes, Pastors and People: the Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (revised edn., London: Routledge, 2002).

Dowden, Edward, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875; London: Nabu Press, 2010).

Duffy, Eamon, 'The godly and the multitude in Stuart England', *Seventeenth Century* 1:1 (1986).

Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (1992; Yale: Yale University Press, 2005 new edn.).

Duffy, Eamon, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London: Yale University Press, 2001).

Duffy, Eamon, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009).

Duncan-Jones, E.E., 'Hermione in Ovid and Shakespeare', *Notes and Queries* 211 (1996).

Duncan-Jones, Katherine, *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

Durston, C., and Eales, J., eds, *The Culture of English Puritanism: 1560-1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

Dutton, Richard, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Edmondson, Todd, 'Prospero's Exile and the Tempest of the English Reformation', *Religion and the Arts* 14 (2010).

Edwards, Philip, 'An approach to the problem of *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare Survey* 5 (1952).

Eire, Carlos M. N., *War Against the Idols: the Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Eire, Carlos M. N., *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650* (London: Yale University Press, 2016).

Eliot, T.S., *Collected Poems: 1909-1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963).

Eliot, T.S., *The Poems of T.S. Eliot, Volume I*, ed. Christopher Ricks & Jim McCue (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

Engberg-Pedersen, Troels, '"Everything is Clean" and "Everything that is Not of Faith is Sin": The Logic of Pauline Casuistry in Romans 14.1-15.13', in P. Middleton, A. Paddison & K.L. Wenell (eds), *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark International, 2011).

Erne, Lukas, '*The Spanish Tragedy*: Framing Revenge', in *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

Evans, B., *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

Felperin, Howard, 'This Great Miracle: *Pericles*', in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Fernie, Ewan, ed., *Spiritual Shakespeares*, (London: Routledge, 2005).

Fernie, Ewan, 'Terrible Action: Recent Criticism and Questions of Agency', *Shakespeare* 2:1 (2006).

Fernie, Ewan, 'Dollimore's Challenge', *Shakespeare Studies* 35 (2007).

Fesko, John, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville: Reformed Academic Press, 2001).

Fincham, Kenneth, & Tyacke, N., *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship: 1547-c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Fletcher, Angus, '*Doctor Faustus* and the Lutheran Aesthetic', *English Literary Renaissance* 35 (2005).

Fletcher, Antony, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997).

Fletcher, John, *The Island Princess*, ed. Clare McManus (London: Bloomsbury Arden Early Modern Drama, 2013).

Forker, Charles R., '"A Little More than Kin, and Less than Kind": Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism, and Identity in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama', in *Fancy's Images: Contexts, Settings, and Perspectives in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990).

Fowler, Alastair, 'Leontes' contrition and the repair of nature', *Essays and Studies* 31 (1978).

Foxe, John, *Acts and Monuments* (1563).

Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; Princeton University Press, new edition, 1971).

Frye, Northrop, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Tragicomedy* (1965; New Edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Gorfain, Phyllis, 'Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles*', in *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976).

Gossett, Suzanne, ed., *Pericles* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980; repub. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Greenblatt, Stephen, 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion', *Shakespeare Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, New Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Greenblatt, Stephen, '*The Tempest*: Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne', repr. in Kiernan Ryan (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Last Plays* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago, Illinois: Chicago University Press, 2010).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Expanded edn.: Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Greenblatt, Stephen, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (London: Bodley Head, 2017).

Grantley, Darryll, *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period* (Scarecrow Press, 2013).

Gribben, Crawford, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2007).

Gribben, Crawford, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Griffiths, Trevor R., '"This island's mine": Caliban and colonialism', *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983).

Groves, Beatrice, Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare 1592-1604 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

Gurr, Andrew, 'The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in The Winter's Tale', *Shakespeare Quarterly 34* (1983).

Gurr, Andrew, '*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars', *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1988).

Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Gurr, Andrew, Farah Karim-Cooper, Farah, eds., *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Gurr, Andrew, 'New Directions: Sources and Creativity in *The Tempest*', in Alden T. Vaughan & Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest: A Critical Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Hackett, Helen, *Women and Tragicomedy Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Hall, S.G., *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (1991; 2nd Revised Edn, London: SPCK, 2005 Edn).

Halpern, Richard, *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Hamlin, William, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Hart, F. Elizabeth, 'Cerimon's "rough music" in *Pericles*, 3.2', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000).

Hart, F. Elizabeth, '"Great is Diana" of Shakespeare's Ephesus', *Studies in English Literature* 43 (2003).

Hartley, John E., ed., *Leviticus: Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. IV* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015).

Hassel Jr., R. Chris, *Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 1979).

Hassel Jr., R. Chris, *Shakespeare's Religious Language: A Dictionary* (2005; London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Hazel Smith, John, *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist: Titus et Gesippus; Christus Triumphans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).

Hazlitt, William, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (First pub., 1817; repr. London: Create Space Publishing, 2010).

Heal, Felicity, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Healy, Margaret, '*Pericles* and the Pox', in Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (eds), *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

Heinemann, Margot, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Walter Shrewing (1980; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Honigmann, E.A.J., *Othello* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1999).

Hooker, Richard, *The Folger Library Editions of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Georges Edelen, et al., 7 vols (Washington, D.C.: Folger Library, 1977).

Hope, Jonathan, *Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Socio-linguistic Study* (1994; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Hopkins, Lisa, 'Gerontus and Early Modern Dramatic Representations of Jews', paper given at 'Performance as Research in Early English Theatre Studies: *The Three Ladies of London* in Context', McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 23-25 June 2015.

Horne, Alistair, *Seven Ages of Paris: Portrait of a City* (London: Random House, 2003).

Houlbrooke, Ralph, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (1998; New Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Houliston, Victor, 'Why Robert Persons Would Not Be Pacified: Edmund Bunny's Theft of *The Book of Resolution*', in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits*, ed. Thomas McCoog (Rome: Institutuum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 2007).

Hulme, Peter, 'Hurricanes in the Caribbees: The Constitution of the Discourse of English Colonialism', in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francis Barker (Colchester Press, 1981).

Hunt, Arnold, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Hunt, Maurice, 'Shakespeare's *Pericles* and the Acts of the Apostles', *Christianity and Literature* 49 (2000).

Hunt, Maurice, *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness: Its Play and Tolerance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

Hunt, Maurice, '"Bearing Hence": Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature* 44.2 (2004).

Hunter, Robert, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

Hunter, Robert, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgements* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1982).

Ingram, M., *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Jacobs, Alan, *The 'Book of Common Prayer': A Biography* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2013).

James VI/ I, *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialoge* (Edinburgh, 1597).

James, William, 'The Will to Believe', collected in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1896; repr. Dover Publications, 2003).

Jensen, Phebe, 'Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55:3 (2004).

Jensen, Phebe, 'Falstaff in Illyria: The second Henriad and *Twelfth Night*', in *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Jewel, John, *Two Treatises: I, on the Holy Scriptures, II, on the Sacraments* (Pub. Oxford, 1840; repr. London: Classic Reprint, 2015).

Johnson, Samuel, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Mona Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

Johnston, Andrew James, 'Sailing the Seas of Literary History: Gower, Chaucer, and the Problem of Incest in Shakespeare's *Pericles*', in *Poetica* 41, No. 3/4 (2009).

Johnston, Andrew James, *Performing the Middle Ages from 'Beowulf' to 'Othello'* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009).

Jones, Gwilym, *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

Jones, Martin, *The Counter Reformation: Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Jones, Norman, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2002).

Jonson, Ben, *Ben Jonson*, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy & Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford, 1925-1952).

Jowett, John, 'Middleton and Debt in *Timon of Athens*' in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare*, ed., Linda Woodbridge (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 2003).

Jowett, John, ed., 'A Divided Play – Middleton's Hand – Shakespeare and Middleton' in *The Oxford Shakespeare: Timon of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Karakasis, Evangelos, *Terence and the Language of Roman Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Karim-Cooper, Farah, & Stern, Tiffany, eds., *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare Library, 2013).

Karim-Cooper, Farah, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

Kermode, Frank, ed., *The Tempest* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1961).

Kermode, Frank, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).

Kernan, Alvin, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theatre in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).

Kerridge, Eric, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After* (1969; repr. London: Routledge, 2015).

Kerrigan, John, 'Swearing in Jest: *Love's Labour's Lost*', in *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Kirwan, Peter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha: Negotiating the Boundaries of the Dramatic Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Kliger, Samuel, *The Goths in England* (1952, repr. London: Literary Licensing Publishers, 2011).

Knapp, Jeffrey, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Knight, G. Wilson, *The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays* (London: Methuen, 1948).

Knowles, James, ed., 'Scurrile Inventions and Illiterate Bricklayers: London and Popular Theatre', in *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Kyd, Thomas, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Gurr, A. & Mulryne, J.R., eds (London: Methuen Drama, 2009).

Kurland, Stuart, '"We need no more of your advice": Political Realism in *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991).

Lake, Peter, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', Part Three, Chapter Five, in David Scott Kastan, ed., *A Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

Lamb, Charles, *The Dramatic Essays* (repr. London: Ulan Press, 2012).

Lander, Jesse M., *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Lee, Sidney, *Life of William Shakespeare* (1898).

Lee, Sidney, 'Caliban's visits to England', *Cornhill Magazine*, n.s. 34 (1913).

Lee, Sidney, 'The Call of the West: America and Elizabethan England', Part 3: 'The American Indian and Elizabethan England', *Scribner's Magazine* (Sept. 1907); reprinted in *Elizabethan and Other Essays*, ed. Frederick S. Boas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929).

Lerer, Seth, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Lischer, Richard, *The Company af Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

Loades, David M., *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553–58* (London & New York: Longman, 1991).

Loewenstein, David, & Witmore, Mcihael, eds., *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Loon, Borin van, *Introducing Critical Theory* (Thriplow: Icon Books, 2009).

Loomba, Anita, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1992).

Loomba, Anita, *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, Anita Loomba & Martin Orkin, eds (London: Routledge New Accents, 1998).

Loomba, Anita, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Love, Nicholas, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ, a Reading Text*, ed. Michael Sargent (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

Low, Antony, Review of Maurice Hunt's *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness, Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.3 (2006).

Lupton, Julia Reinhard, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Lupton, Julia Reinhard, 'The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies', *English Language Notes* 44 (Spring 2006).

Lupton, Julia Reinhard, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Luther, Martin, *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525), in: *Luther's Works*, 55 Vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan [Vol. 1-30] & Helmut T. Lehmann [Vol. 31-55] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House [Vol. 1-30]; Philadelphia: Fortress Press [Vol. 31-55], 1955), Vol. 40.

Lyne, Raphael, *Shakespeare's Late Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Later Reformation in England: 1547-1603* (London: Palgrave, 1990).

MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).

MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Allen Lane Publishing, 2003).

Malone, Edmond, ed., *Plays and Poems*, 10 vols (1790).

Maltby, Judith, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Mannoni, Oscar, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (1956; repr. University of Michigan Press, 1990).

Marcus, Leah S., '*Cymbeline* and the Unease of Topicality' in *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

Markschies, C. & Bowden, J. (trans.), *Between Two Worlds: Structures of Early Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1999).

Marotti, Arthur F., ed., *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

Marsh, Christopher, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding their Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

Marshall, Peter, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Marshall, Peter, *The Mercurial Emperor: The Magic Circle of Rudolf II in Renaissance Prague* (London: Pimlico Press, 2007).

Marx, Steven, 'A Masque of Revelation: *The Tempest* as Apocalypse', in *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Marx, Steven, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Matar, Nabil, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Mayer, Jean-Christophe, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion and the Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

McCabe, Richard, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law* (1993; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

McCarthy, Conor, ed., *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2003).

McCarthy, Conor, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2004).

McCoy, Richard C., *Faith in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

McCullough, Peter, 'Lancelot Andrewes and Language', *The Anglican Theological Review* No. 74 (1992).

McCullough, Peter, 'Lancelot Andrewes's Transforming Passions', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71:4 (December 2008).

McCullough, Peter, 'Andrewes: Liturgy, Music & Sermon', in Alec Ryrie & Natalie Mears, eds, *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern England* (Ashgate: Routledge, 2012).

McDonald, Russ, 'Reading *The Tempest*', *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1990).

McDonald, Russ, *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

McGrath, A., *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

McLain, Lisa, 'Without church, cathedral or shrine: the search for religious space among Catholics in England, 1559-1625', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002).

McMullan, Gordon, ed., 'All is true: Truth and topicality', in *Henry VIII* (London: A & C Black, 2000).

Mebane, John, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Methuen, Charlotte, *Luther and Calvin: Religious Revolutionaries* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011).

Metzger, Bruce, 'The Geneva Bible of 1560', *Theology Today* 17 (1960).

Michalski, S., *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: the Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (repr. London: Routledge, 2011).

Miller, V., *The Lambeth Articles: Doctrinal Development and Conflict in 16th Century England* (London: Latimer House Press, 1994).

Milton, Anthony, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Milton, John, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Revised Edition: London: Routledge, 2007).

Mikalachki, Jodi, 'The Masculine Tragicomedy of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46:3 (1995).

Miola, R.S., 'New Comedy in *King Lear*', in *Philological Quarterly* 73 (1994).

Miola, R.S., '"An Alien People Clutching Their Gods"? Shakespeare's Ancient Religions', *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001).

Montrose, Louis A., 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and politics of Culture', in H. Aram Vesser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

Moore, Jeanie G., 'Riddled Romance: Kinship and Kingship in *Pericles*', *Rocky Mountain Review* (2003).

Mowat, Barbara, 'Prospero, Agrippa, and hocus pocus', *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981).

Mowat, Barbara, 'Prospero's book', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001).

Mowat, Barbara, 'Q2 *Othello* and the 1606 "Acte to restraine the Abuses of Players"', in Christa Jansohn & Bodo Plachta, eds, *Varianten-Variants-Varientes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

Mowat, Barabra, A., *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (1976; University of Georgia Press, new edition, 2011).

Mullaney, Steven, 'After the new historicism', *Alternative Shakespeares Vol 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996).

Munro, Lucy, *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590-1674* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Murdock, Graeme, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches, c. 1540-1620* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Murphy, John, *Darkness and Devils: Exorcism and King Lear* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1984).

Murphy-O'Connor, J., *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).

Neely, Carol, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (1985; Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Nevo, Ruth, *Shakespeare's Other Language* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987).

Nevo, Ruth, 'The Perils of Pericles', in *Shakespeare's Other Language* (London: Methuen, 1987).

Ng, Su Fan, *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Nicholl, Charles, *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

Norbrook, David, '"What Cares These Roarers for the Name of King"': Language and Utopia in *The Tempest*', in Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (eds), *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Nosworthy, J.M., ed., *Cymbeline* (1955; repr. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014).

Nuttall, A.D., *Shakespeare the Thinker* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007).

O'Connell, Michael, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theatre in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Oldridge, Darren, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England* (Routledge, 2016).

Orgel, Stephen, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding (1567), ed. Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).

Pafford, J. H. P., ed., *The Winter's Tale* (London: Thomson, 1967; 2nd ed. 1999).

Pak, G. Sujin, *The Judaizing Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Palfrey, Simon, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Palfrey, Simon, 'Macbeth and Kierkegaard', *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (2004).

Palmer, D. W., 'Merchants and Miscegenation: *The Three Ladies of London*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Merchant of Venice*', in: Joyce Green MacDonald, ed., *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997).

Parker, Patricia, 'Sound Government, Polymorphic Bears: *The Winter's Tale* and Other Metamorphoses of Eye and Ear', in *The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson, eds., (John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Parker, T. H. L., *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995).

Parkinson, Anne, 'Religious Drama in Kendal: the Corpus Christi Play in the Reign of James I', *Recusant History* 25:4 (2001).

Parr, A., ed., *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Parry, Glyn, *The Arch Conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Pater, C. Augustus, 'Calvin, the Jews, and the Judaic Legacy', in E. J. Furcha, *In Honor of John Calvin: Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1987).

Paterson, W.B., *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Studies in Early Modern British History, 2000).

Pearson, D'Orsay, '"Unless I be reliev'd by prayer": *The Tempest* in perspective', *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974).

Pelikan, Jaroslav, *Mary Through the Centuries* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998).

Pepys, Samuel, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell & Hyman, 1970-85).

Perkins, William, *A Godly and Learned Exposition … Upon … Revelation* (1606: preached 1595).

Pfaff, Richard, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Pitcher, John, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

Porter, Linda, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen* (London: Piatkus Press, 2009).

Porter, Stephen, *Shakespeare's London: Everyday Life in London, 1580-1616* (London: Amberley Publishing, 2011).

Price, Richard M., 'The *Theotokos* and the Council of Ephesus', in Chris Maunder (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns and Oates, 2008).

Prior, Charles, *Defining the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Randall, Dale B.J., '"This is the chase": or, further pursuit of Shakespeare's bear', *Shakespeare Journal* 121 (1985).

Ravelhofer, B., '"Beasts of Recreacion": Henslowe's White Bears', *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002).

Ravenswaay, J. Marius J. Lange van, 'Calvin and the Jews', in Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvijn Handboek* [*The Calvin Handbook*], trans. Kampen Kok (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

Reay, Barry, 'Popular Culture in Early Modern England' in Barry Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1985; London: Routledge, 1988).

Reed, J. & Crossan, J., *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (London: Harper One, 2005).

Relihan, Constance C., 'Liminal Geography: *Pericles* and the Politics of Place', *Philological Quarterly* 7 (1992).

Richmond, Hugh, 'Shakespeare's Navarre', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 43 (1978-9).

Robinson, John A. T., *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2012).

Rose, Mark, *Shakespearean Design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972).

Rosenblatt, Jason, 'Aspects of the Incest Problem in *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29:3 (1978).

Rubin, Miri, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (1991; Revised Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Rufo, Jeffrey A., '"He needs will be Absolute Milan": The Political Thought of *The Tempest*', in *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, ed., Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2014).

Ryan, Kiernan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Sanders, E.P., *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1983).

Savigny, G. de Berthier de, *Histoire de France* (1977; Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1999).

Scott Kastan, David, *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Scott Kastan, David, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Schmidgall, Gary, *Shakespeare and the Courtly Aesthetic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).

Schwartz, Regina Mara, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Scott Dixon, C., *The Reformation in Germany* (Oxford: John Wiley, 2002).

Shaheen, Naseed, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (1999; Revised edition: Newark, DA: Delaware University Press, 2002).

Shapiro, James, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996).

Shapiro, James, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

Shapiro, James, *1606: The Year of Lear* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

Shell, Alison, 'St. Winifred's Well and its Meaning in Post-Reformation British Catholic Culture', in Peter Davidson & Jill Bepler, eds, *The Triumphs of the Defeated: Early Modern Festivals and Messages of Legitimacy* (Wolfenbuettel: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007).

Shell, Alison, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, *The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Shuger, Debora, 'Subversive fathers and suffering subjects: Shakespeare and Christianity', in Donna Hamilton and Richard Strier, eds, *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Shuger, Debora, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (1990; Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997).

Shuger, Debora, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in 'Measure for Measure'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

Siemon, James Edward, '"But It Appears She Lives": Iteration in *The Winter's Tale*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 89 (1974).

Simon, Joan, *Education and Society in Elizabethan England* (1966; New Edition: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Singh, Jyotsna G., 'Caliban versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of *The Tempest*', in Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kalan & Dympna Callaghan (eds), *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 2: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

Sklar, Jay, ed., *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: I.V. Press, 2014).

Smith, Emma, '*The Tempest*', Approaching Shakespeare Lecture Series, Oxford University, 14th November 2011. Available at: podcasts.ox.ac.uk/people/emma-smith.

Smith, Emma, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Speaight, Robert W., 'Shakespeare in Britain', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977).

Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene*'s (1590/6; London: Penguin Classics, 2007).

Spenser, Edmund, *Shepheardes Calender* (1579; London: Portable Poetry Edition, 2017).

Spurr, John, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

Stachniewski, John, 'Calvinist psychology in *Macbeth*', *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1988).

Stallybrass, Peter, & White, Allon, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Metheun, 1986).

Steen, Sara Jayne, *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Steinmetz, David C., *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Strachey, Lytton, 'Shakespeare's Final Period', repr. in *Books and Characters* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1922).

Stewart, Alan, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI & I* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003).

Stone, Lawrence, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977; London: Allen Lane, 1990).

Strier, Richard, 'Shakespeare and the Skeptics', *Religion and Literature* 32:2 (2000).

Stubbes, Phillip, *An Anatomie of Abuses* (1583).

Super, Robert H., ed., *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960–1977), Volume VI.

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880).

Sypher, Wylie, *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (Seabury Press New York, 1978).

Tannehill, Robert C., *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: Wipf & Stock Publishing, 2006).

Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Taylor, Gary, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Taylor, Gary, 'Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton', *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1994).

Taylor, Gary, 'The Cultural Politics of Maybe', in Dutton, Findlay & Wilson, eds, *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Taylor, Gary, & Egan, Gabriel, eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).

Thomas, Keith, 'The Puritans and Adultery: the Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in Keith Thomas & Donald Henshaw Pennington, eds, *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

Thompson, Ann, '"Miranda, where's your sister?": reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest*', in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers (Hempel Hempstead: Prentice Hall Publishing, 1991).

Thompson, Ann, & Taylor, Neil, eds, *Hamlet: the text of 1604* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

Thompson, Ann, & Taylor, Neil, eds, *Hamlet: the Texts of 1603 and 1623* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007)

Thompson, Ayanna, & Honingmann, E.A.J., eds, *Othello* (1997; Revised edn, London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016).

Trevor-Roper, Hugh, *Princes and Artists, Patronage and Ideology at Four Habsburg Courts 1517–1633* (1976; London: Thames & Hudson, 1991).

Traister, Barbara Howard, *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1984).

Tricomi, Albert H., *Reading Tudor-Stuart Texts Through Cultural Historicism* (Gainsville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996).

Tuck, Richard, 'Power and Authority in Seventeenth Century England', *The Historical Journal* 17:1 (1974).

Tuck, Richard, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Tyndale, William, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue; The Supper of the Lord After the True Meaning of John VI. and 1 Cor. XI. and Wm. Tracy's Testament Expounded* (1536; repr. New York: Nabu Press, 2010).

Twycross, Meg, 'Some Approaches to Dramatic Festivity, Especially Processions', in Meg Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1996).

Vaughan, Virginia Mason, & Alden T. Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Vaughan, Virginia Mason, & Alden T. Vaughan, eds, 'Brave new world', in *The Tempest* (London: Thomson Publishing, 1999).

Vaughan, Virginia Mason, & Alden T. Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest* (1999; Revised edition: London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

Velz, John, 'Shakespeare and the Geneva Bible: The Circumstances', in Takashi Tozuka & J.R. Mulryne, eds, *Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson: New Directions in Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

Viswanathan, Gauri, 'Secularism in the Framework of Heterodoxy', *Modern Language Association* 123:2 (March 2008).

Vitkus, Daniel J., *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: "Selimus, Emperor of the Turks", "A Christian Turned Turk", and "The Renegado"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Vitkus, Daniel J., *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

Walch, Günter, '"What's Past is Prologue": Metatheatrical Memory and Transculturation in *The Tempest*' in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot & Michele Willems, eds, *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Walsham, Alexandra, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (London: Boydell Press, 1999).

Walsham, Alexandra, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Walsham, Alexandra, '"Domme Preachers": Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print', *Past and Present* 168:1 (2000).

Walsham, Alexandra, P. Collinson & A. Hunt, 'Religious Publishing in England, 1557-1640', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. IV, 1557-1695*, eds, J. Barnard, D. F. McKenzie & M. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Walsham, Alexandra, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal* 46:4 (December 2003).

Walsham, Alexandra, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

Walsham, Alexandra, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom, 1300-1700* (London: Routledge, 2014).

Warren, Roger, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Warren, Roger, Taylor, G., & Jackson, M.P., *A reconstructed text of Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Wasson, J. & Palmer, B.D., eds, *Records of Early English Drama – West Riding, Yorkshire and Derbyshire* (Durham: Durham University Press, 2005).

Watson, Nicholas, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval Vernacular Theology', *Speculum* 70 (1995).

Wayne, Valerie, ed., *Cymbeline* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017).

Weimann, Robert, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

Weir, A*., he Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1991; London: Vintage, 2007).

Whitelock, Anne, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

Whitfield White, Paul, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', in John D. Cox & David Scott Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

Wickham, Glynne, 'From tragedy to tragi-comedy: King Lear as prologue', *Shakespeare Survey* 26 (1973).

Wickham, Glynne, 'Masque and anti-masque in *The Tempest*', *Essays and Studies* 28 (1975).

Willis, Deborah, 'Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism', *Studies in English Literature* 1500-1900: 29 (1989).

Wilson, Peter H., 'Beginnings: Trouble in the Heart of Christendom', in *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

Wilson, Richard, *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

Wind, Edgar, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958; revised edition: New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1969).

Womack, Peter, 'Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999).

Wood, Andy, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Woods, Gillian, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford English Monographs, 2013).

Woods, Gillian, 'Indulgent Representation: Theatricality and Sectarian Metaphor in *The Tempest', Literature Compass 11 (2014).*

Woudhuysen, H.R., ed., *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, (London: Penguin, 1989).

Woudhuysen, H.R., ed., *Love's Labour's Lost* (London: Thomson Learning, 1998).

Wrightson, Keith, *English Society 1580-1680* (1982; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

Wynter, Sylvia, 'Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un / silencing the Demonic Ground of Caliban's Woman', in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Fido (London: Africa Research and Publications, 1995).

Yates, Frances, *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* (London: Routledge, 1975).

Yates, Frances, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972; repr. London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

Yates, Frances, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964; repr. London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

Candidate CV

Education

(BA) Philosophy and Theology
University of Oxford (Trinity College), UK
1998-2001

(MA) Philosophy and Theology
University of Oxford (Trinity College), UK
2012-2013

(PhD) English Literature
Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
2013-Present

Employment

English Language and Literature Teacher
Onomichi Kita Senior High School, Hiroshima, Japan
2001-2005

English Literature and Philosophy Tutor
First Tutors and Tutor Hunt, London, UK
2005-Present

Director of Studies
Carfax Education, London, UK
2015-16