

**"Beyond a Common Joy":
Criticism and the Value of Shakespeare's Romances**

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**Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies,
University of Ottawa, in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, English Literature.**



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Abstract

“Beyond a Common Joy”: Criticism and the Value of Shakespeare’s Romances

Aware that much recent criticism in Shakespeare studies has again made controversial the long assumed high value of Shakespeare’s writings, my thesis is motivated and unified by one central question: how can literary critics “move closer to a true knowledge of the actual value” of Shakespeare’s romances? This question itself provokes many other questions, however, and to answer these the dissertation falls into three distinct sections.

Chapter one addresses fundamental philosophical questions, particularly what is knowledge, what is truth, what is value, and how may humans, in general, progress towards a true knowledge of the actual value of any object? Rejecting two approaches to these questions that have heavily influenced twentieth-century literary criticism-- Enlightenment science and Nietzschean skepticism--my thesis follows E.D. Hirsch in distinguishing between meaning and value, interpretation and evaluation, and in arguing that both must be objects of knowledge for literary criticism. To answer the foundational question of what knowledge is, and how inquirers may move towards truth, my thesis adopts the epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and methodology of a twentieth-century Canadian Jesuit philosopher, Bernard J.F. Lonergan. Lonergan applies his philosophy to the scholarship of theology, and formulates a method for “collaborative creativity” which includes eight interdependent functional specialities: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. My own first chapter concludes by arguing that, after one answers the question, “what is literature?”, Lonergan’s theological method can also provide a framework for literary critics who hope to be intellectually converted to the meaning of literature, aesthetically converted to its beauty, and morally or perhaps even religiously converted to its actual value.

Yet rather than providing a ‘Lonerganian reading of Shakespeare’ my thesis illustrates what it means for a Lonerganian critic to pursue knowledge of Shakespeare. Chapter two of my thesis attempts to show that the methodology posited by Lonergan can be adapted to organize and apply a wide variety of Shakespearean criticism. Spurred especially by Gary Taylor’s claim that the overabundance of specialist criticism ensures that all interpretations or evaluations of Shakespeare are relative, chapter two argues that many of the most influential traditions of

Shakespearean scholarship, when organized according to Lonergan's methodological framework, can provide a community that any interpreter may employ as a heuristic foundation for moving towards a knowledge of the truth and value of Shakespeare's writings. To support this claim, this chapter surveys a wide variety of sources of Shakespearean interpretation, and briefly explains the foundations of a number of influential approaches to Shakespearean evaluation. Chapter two also concludes, echoing the arguments of chapter one, by arguing that both the *mimesis* of each individual Shakespearean play, and the traditions of criticism that have been brought to it, must determine which modes of interpretation and evaluation are foregrounded by criticism.

In the third major section of my dissertation, chapters three through six, each chapter is devoted to a single romance and begins with a dialectical survey of each play's criticism, particularly the interpretative issues that have especially affected the play's evaluation. Attention is then focused upon a passage from each play (cited in the title of my chapters) which summarises the primary purpose that each play asks critics to evaluate. However, because value is offered by the entire dynamic structure and content of Shakespeare's play, my approach normally moves chronologically through each play and evaluates diverse aspects of its meaning. The values emphasized at the climactic conclusion of each romance then provide the foundation for an evaluation that is made within the broadest intellectual, moral, and religious horizons that I currently envision.

This varied heuristic finds a wide variety of valuable meaning in each romance. In conclusion, the "joy beyond a common joy" felt by the characters at the end of The Tempest is an emotion common to the conclusion of each of Shakespeare's romances, and in each case occurs not only because these characters learn human virtue especially stressed by Christian teaching, but moreover because they experience the grace offered by the providential action of Divinity. In an implicit manner characteristic of medieval and Renaissance art, the apparently classical settings of Shakespeare's romances actually serve to teach Christian truth, and thus become valuable as Christian sacred art. Despite the clarity of this conclusion, the very nature of sacred art ensures that the evaluation of Shakespeare's romances must be an unending attempt to be converted not only to their aesthetic joys, but also to the value of life itself, particularly the Life who freely offers joy to us all.

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Technical Notes

1) Whenever possible, this dissertation strives to conform to the mechanical standards of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (3rd. Ed.). Due to the extensive citations of secondary sources required by a dissertation on Shakespeare, these sources are cited in endnotes following each chapter, rather than in parentheses that would interrupt the dissertation's prose.

2) Except when otherwise noted, biblical references are to the Geneva Bible of 1560 (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1969).

3) Except when otherwise noted, all references to Shakespeare are to the Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

“Precious of itself”: A Lonerganian Approach to Shakespeare and the Question of Value

Sounds good, but is it *worth* anything? Who cares, they (re)- tort. I do.

Christopher Wiseman, “State of the Art”¹

Cecil Graham: What is a cynic?

Lord Darlington: A man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

Oscar Wilde, Lady Windermere’s Fan²

You shall not be
The grave of your deserving; Rome must know
The value of her own.

Cominius, Coriolanus (1.9.19-21)

Introduction: The Issue of Value in Shakespeare Studies

What is the value of Shakespeare’s writings? In particular, what is the value of the four late works--Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest--that today are known variously as ‘romances’, ‘tragicomedies’ or, simply, ‘last plays’? By what process might one come to know this value? Is a knowledge of this value objective, or simply a matter of ever shifting personal and public opinion? For much of the twentieth century, such questions were thought either pointless and unnecessary, or naive and unanswerable. In part, this was so because Shakespeare’s plays and poems were so widely performed and discussed that, implicitly, their high value, and the undisputed greatness of ‘the Bard,’ became a cultural cliché. As well, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith notes, these questions were not raised because it is “a curious feature” of much twentieth-century literary study that this most “venerable, central, theoretically significant, and pragmatically inescapable” issue, the issue of the value of literature, has been “evaded and explicitly exiled by the literary academy.”³

Smith is one of several critics who, near the end of the twentieth century, has again raised the issue of value. Yet within Shakespeare studies, in stark contrast to Coleridge’s view that criticism of Shakespeare must be “reverential,”⁴ the interest in value has often been raised in order to deflate real or perceived bardolatry.⁵ The influential work of Gary Taylor, for example, first lampoons four centuries of the Bard’s ‘reinvention’ as an icon of establishment values, then concludes by arguing that Shakespeare “cannot claim any unique command of theatrical resources,

longevity or reach of reputation, depth or range of style, universality or comprehensiveness.””

Those who still affirm Shakespeare’s high value might articulate this affirmation through the classic defences of literature made by Aristotle, Sidney, or Shelley; but, they do not speak directly to the problematizing of the issue of value that has occurred in the twentieth century. To appreciate the contemporary critic’s difficulty, one must first review two influential yet dialectically opposed twentieth-century approaches to the evaluation of literature. The first, traceable to the late nineteenth century ‘art for art’s sake’ movement, has variously been called formalism, structuralism, or New Criticism, and appears most cogently and influentially within the work of Northrop Frye. The second, known as poststructuralism or postmodernism, stems primarily from the thought of Nietzsche.

Frye regards literature as a unique, self-contained universe,⁷ and argues that moral or evaluative judgements should be excluded from literary criticism. Frye grants that “literature, as an object of study, is a limitless reservoir of potential values,”⁸ but views the job of criticism as the analysis and description of the structures that convey these values within different literary genres. Seeking to establish criticism as an autonomous discipline, and as a “science distinct from taste,” Frye adopts many of the binary disjunctions posited by Enlightenment science: “knowledge and experience, criticism and taste, fact and value, objective intellect and subjective feeling.”⁹

According to Frye, one cannot pursue the study of literature

with the object of arriving at value-judgements, because the only possible goal of study is knowledge. The sense of value is an individual, unpredictable, variable, incommunicable, indemonstrable, and mainly intuitive reaction to knowledge. In knowledge the context of the work of literature is literature; in value-judgement, the context of the work of literature is the reader’s experience.¹⁰

Of the binary disjunctions, the most important for the mid-twentieth century intellectual appeal of Frye’s views is the separation of fact and value which does not allow “ought” to be derived from “is,” a key Enlightenment tenet that was made fashionable again by Ayer’s logical positivism after Moore’s intuition centred epistemology fell out of favour.¹¹ Institutionally, Frye’s views appealed by accommodating the New Critical emphasis on the text apart from authorial intention or effect on an audience, and by justifying the existence of English as an independent university discipline. For this latter aim, Frye also continued the Canadian university appropriation of Arnold, whose

ideal of a classless society Frye held to be the cultural goal of a “disinterested” critic.¹² Frye’s witty, occasionally epigrammatic style makes his arguments more persuasive than they appear in summary, but no less contradictory. As numerous critics point out, implicit value judgements pervade Frye’s work,¹³ and the explicit valuation of “liberal” education in the service of a classless society is today scorned by the socialist left as bourgeois British cultural colonialism, and by the religious right as a vain attempt to offset the growth of scientific technology by substituting literature for religion. Both critiques are, in fairness, more accurately directed against Arnold, whose definition of criticism as “a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world”¹⁴ is perhaps the epitome of a debased humanism unable to coherently articulate its criteria of evaluation.

Given the widespread intellectual incoherence of the nineteenth century, it is unsurprising that another thinker from that age, Nietzsche, would respond by denying the objectivity of truth or morality. Popularly, Nietzsche is known for his announcement of the “death of God” and affirmation of nihilism, but his philosophical foundation is a critique of Enlightenment epistemology and ethics, particularly as formulated by Kant. Whereas the popularly held and institutionally enforced view of Enlightenment science, the kind of science that Frye would have criticism become, confidently asserts the existence of facts and asserts that facts must be pursued in a ‘disinterested,’ ‘value free’ manner, Nietzsche points out that Kantian epistemology could make one far more skeptical about the limits of knowledge. So far from refuting Hume’s skepticism, Nietzsche argues that Kant “no longer has a right to his distinction “appearance” and “thing-in-itself”.¹⁵ Nietzsche believes that our inability to distinguish “the thing-in-itself,” or “noumena,” from the appearance of things, the world of “phenomena,” means that “the biggest fable of all is the fable of knowledge.”¹⁶ Most significantly, according to Nietzsche, the epistemology of Kant rules out any stable knowledge of facts: “A thing-in-itself is just as perverse as a ‘sense-in-itself,’ ‘a meaning in itself.’ There are not ‘facts-in-themselves,’ for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be ‘facts.’”¹⁷ Without facts, there can be no objective knowledge of the kind that Enlightenment science strives to achieve.

Even more influential, though, is Nietzsche’s application of skeptical relativism to ethics. Despite his epistemological skepticism, Kant had proceeded to an ethical ideal, the “categorical imperative,” which requires one to act “only on that maxim whereby [one] can at the same time will

that it should become a universal law.”¹⁸ Kant rejects “pure reason” as a source for knowledge of truth, but retains belief in a “practical reason” which retains the foundational postulates of “immortality, freedom ... and the existence of God.”¹⁹ Nietzsche ridicules Kant’s views, however, and rejects God or the freedom of the will as unknowable ideals that inevitably become mere rationalizations of self-interest.²⁰ The fundamental principle of morality is thus not a disinterested categorical imperative, and still less the even more illusory “slave morality” of Judaeo-Christianity,²¹ but must instead be an openly self-interested expression of one’s “will to power.” As Alasdair MacIntyre usefully observes, Nietzsche disposes of “the Enlightenment project to discover rational foundations for an objective morality” by arguing, fundamentally, that “if there is nothing to morality but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates.”²² Individual “will to power” must lead to a “Transvaluation of All Values,”²³ as Nietzsche famously phrased a late work, and at the very least turns the Enlightenment fact / value hierarchy on its head; since no inquiry is value-free, then the very concept of fact is illusory, and it is value that determines what becomes known as “truth.” For Nietzsche, at “the bottom” of any inquiry into truth “there always lies, ‘what is that for me?’”²⁴

The ubiquitous use of the colloquial phrase “for me” suggests how thoroughly Nietzsche’s value theory has been assimilated by contemporary popular culture, where it serves as the ideal ethical model of a capitalism fuelled by narcissistic individualism. As one of my opening epigrams intends, it is an extraordinarily self-aware exemplar of Nietzsche’s age and ethos, Oscar Wilde, who links this modernist ethos to its ancient philosophical vocation, that of the cynic. Cynics have no basis for coherent or progressive knowledge, yet in our contemporary universities many academics have made Nietzsche a powerful presence within contemporary philosophy and literary criticism. As each acknowledges, Nietzsche is the primary influence upon Derrida’s deconstruction, which denies “meaning-in-itself” and requires relativism in interpretation; upon Foucault’s historical “archaeology,” which inspires New Historicism to view history not as factual but as a story told through the ideology of those who triumph in their “will to power”;²⁵ and upon Rorty’s “anti-foundationalism,” which is perhaps the most radical denial of philosophy’s ability to provide the basis for knowing reality.²⁶ These philosophers also learn a comic, gleeful acceptance of nihilism from Nietzsche, who said that after a genealogy of the history of thought, “perhaps we

shall then recognize that the thing-in-itself is worth a Homeric laugh; that it seemed so much, indeed everything, and is really empty, namely, empty of meaning.”²⁷

Jovial acceptance of nihilism would seem antithetical to the ethically motivated movements that also grew as antagonists to Enlightenment liberalism in the second half of the twentieth-century, feminism and Marxism. However, on fundamental epistemological and ethical questions--the key questions of truth and value--it is surprising how Nietzschean key theorists are for both movements. Annette Kolodny, even while arguing that feminist criticism has a “particular attentiveness to the ways in which literature encodes and disseminates cultural value systems,”²⁸ and that “ideas are important because they determine the ways we live, or want to live, in the world,”²⁹ nonetheless argues that the three basic tenets of feminist criticism are:

- 1) Literary history (and with that, the historicity of literature) is a fiction; 2) insofar as we are taught how to read, what we engage are not texts but paradigms; and, finally, (3) that since the grounds upon which we assign aesthetic value to texts are never infallible, unchangeable, or universal, we must reexamine not only our aesthetics, but, as well, the inherent biases and assumptions informing the critical methods which (in part) shape our aesthetic responses.³⁰

Each of these tenets rests fundamentally on Nietzschean skepticism about our inability to know the thing-in-itself, either the facts of history or the values of ethics. This skepticism seems equally incompatible with classical Marxism; yet prominent Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton, on the issue of value, again sounds very Nietzschean:

There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said or have to say about it. ‘Value’ is a transitive term; it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes.”

The reflections of both Kolodny and Eagleton on value are prompted, to some degree, by the issue of the literary canon, and of Shakespeare’s role in it. Male critics who argue that “If Kate Chopin were *really* worth reading ... she’d have lasted--like Shakespeare,”³² have taught Kolodny the fallacy of using longevity of reputation as a criterion of canon evaluation, while Eagleton precedes the just cited statement on value by arguing that “the so-called ‘literary canon’” must “be recognized as a *construct*, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time.”³³

Despite Shakespeare's current standing within the canon, he too may eventually be revalued; for Eagleton,

It is thus quite possible that, given a deep enough transformation of our history, we may in the future produce a society which is unable to get anything at all out of Shakespeare. His works might seem simply desperately alien, full of styles of thought and feeling which such a society found limited or irrelevant. In such a situation, Shakespeare would be no more valuable than much present-day graffiti. And though many people would consider such a social condition tragically impoverished, it seems to me dogmatic not to entertain the possibility that it might arise rather from a general human enrichment.³⁴

If Eagleton's views once seemed radical, they are now clearly mainstream, and the most developed theoretical discussion of value and the literary canon in contemporary criticism, Barbara Herrnstein Smith's Contingencies of Value, makes similar points. Although Smith echoes Eagleton's views on the arbitrary place of Shakespeare within the literature canon,³⁵ Shakespeare appears most originally in her work within a discussion of the Sonnets. They illustrate, for Smith, that the value and indeed meaning of this work is ever changing, shifting, and unpredictably contingent upon unknowable factors. Explicitly reversing Frye's fact / value split, Smith clearly follows Nietzsche by arguing that "value creates value."³⁶ In Smith's hermeneutic, "all three" factors in the evaluation of literature--the interpretation, the evaluation, and the "psychological set" of the reader --"operate and interact in the same fashion as the hermeneutic circle itself: that is, simultaneously causing and validating themselves *and* causing and validating each other."³⁷ The relative importance of the three factors is left ambiguous, but the preeminence of Smith's own 'psychological set' is nevertheless made clear when she closes her discussion with the stunning claim--which even she admits is a "monstrous piece of immodesty"³⁸ -- that

while the history of the sonnets' value must include, as one brief chapter, the history of their value for me, my personal history is also a picture and parable of the total history on the sonnets' value for all their readers, ever.³⁹

Thus identifying herself as the principle of universal history, Smith would seem to have no need for communal interpretation. While acknowledging that such communities do exist, she attributes to them the same inevitable "contingency" that governs her own evaluations; analogous to her own

history of reading the Sonnets, she argues, the history of literature's reception shows its value to be socially constructed and inevitably "contingent" or changeable so that

in accord with the changing interests and other values of a community, various potential meanings of a work will become more or less visible (or "realizable"), and the visibility--and hence value--of the work for that community will change accordingly.⁴⁰

On this theory of evaluation, it follows that *the* "problem for the theory of literary value" thus becomes how value judgements "*are* formed, sustained, and exercised,"⁴¹ not whether such judgements are valid. Rather than "misguided and futile attempts" for "true" or objective value and for uniquely "correct" interpretations,⁴² Smith would confine evaluative criticism either to autobiographical close reading or to empirical, sociological study of the reasons why different groups value different aspects of literature at different times.

Smith's theory of evaluative criticism is put into practice by Taylor's Reinventing Shakespeare. Recognizing that "Shakespeare provides the best specimen in English, one of the best specimens in any language, for investigating the mechanisms of cultural renown," but noting that this subject "is so big that it has no name," Taylor invents a term for it: "Shakesperotics."⁴³ He then embarks on a "history of Shakesperotics" which "becomes, inevitably, a history of four centuries of our culture."⁴⁴ This remarkably broad and informative study does illustrate the principle with which Taylor begins, that "the issue of the value accorded to Shakespeare's works cannot be disentangled from the values that people have found within those works."⁴⁵ Yet, by the end of this work, Taylor's study has brought him no closer to knowing the value of Shakespeare, but only the values of other critics or of his own; resignedly, Taylor concludes that Shakespeare's stellar energies have been trapped within the gravity well of his own reputation. We find in Shakespeare only what we bring to him or what others have left behind; he gives us back our own values. And it is no use pretending that some uniquely clever, honest, and disciplined critic can find a technique, an angle, that will enable us to lead a mass escape from this trap.⁴⁶

Taylor, like so many other contemporary critics influenced by Nietzsche, ends by telling us that all writing about others can only become, in the end, rewriting of ourselves.

At this point it is well to pause and ask why any reader or writer would want to continue to study the evaluation of Shakespeare. Why expend so much effort trying to learn values that are

either unknowable, continuously shifting, or projections of what one already possesses? The obvious Nietzschean response to this question is academic power, and one might offer a political critique of Eagleton, Smith, or Taylor that would be similar to the way in which they critique Frye. An alternative to continuing this cycle, however, would be to address the fundamental conflicts between Enlightenment liberalism and Nietzschean postmodernism in a philosophically compelling way, and then apply the resulting understanding to articulate again what makes Shakespeare a valuable form of culture. One literary critic who attempts this path is E.D. Hirsch. He offers a promising compromise by arguing that the “meaning” of a work is the result of objective interpretation, but that its “significance” or value is determined by the ideological horizons of its interpreters.⁴⁷ Hirsch’s approach maintains both that literary criticism must be a form of knowledge, and that it should be influenced by value judgements; just as importantly, he argues that we must be able to distinguish the two activities. As well, Hirsch understands that a fundamental lack of confidence in an interpreter’s ability to know truth (the effect of Nietzschean skepticism), and in the validity and possibility of a critic making value judgements (the effect of the Enlightenment fact / value division), greatly damages the health of any form of inquiry in the humanities. Thus Hirsch will first “identify the health of the humanities with their cognitive self-confidence,” but then also argue that this health “is also dependent upon their axiological self-confidence, their sense that they are pursuing *valuable* inquiry”; further, “it is just as important to distinguish these two kinds of health as it is to promote both.”⁴⁸ Hirsch does not, however, address more fundamental philosophical questions--most obviously, ‘what is knowledge?’. Also, Hirsch’s failure to address whether some values are more “significant” than others invites relativism as much as does Smith’s approach. Hirsch does seem to recognize that criticism requires a fully critical philosophy⁴⁹ but, in sum, he himself does not adequately answer several crucial questions: what is scientific knowledge; that is, how do we know when facts are really facts? what is value, or, what makes values truly valuable? what role do facts play in the formation of value, and what role do values play in the discovery of facts? what role does the human subject play in answering these questions? is there a method by which human groups can systematically move towards a knowledge of truth and value?

While almost all philosophers try to answer these difficult questions, but none are universally accepted, in my view a particularly useful response to the current debate about value is

made by the Canadian Jesuit philosopher Bernard J. F. Lonergan. A philosopher-theologian might seem an odd choice as a foundation for literary theory; however, a central feature of Lonergan's philosophy is its generality. Lonergan offers a philosophy of knowledge and value, the true and the good, which is intended for any field of inquiry. Thus Lonergan's 1957 Insight: A Study of Human Understanding provides a comprehensive epistemology and mainly employs examples from mathematics and the physical sciences; however, its principles are also applied by Lonergan to interpretation. Lonergan's 1972 Method in Theology applies Insight's principles for knowing truth to the problem of knowing value, and thus provides a useful model of how to avoid both Nietzschean relativism (which occurs when value is not dependent upon truth), and Enlightenment objectivism (which elevates and separates knowledge from value). If Lonergan's project is at all valid, his epistemology will offer us a clearer understanding of what knowledge of meaning and value is, of how literary criticism can be a form of such knowledge, and will also provide a method by which criticism can move closer to a true knowledge of the actual value of any literature, including Shakespearean drama.

Lonergan's Epistemology: The Four Transcendental Precepts

Often labelled a Thomist because of his early work on Aquinas, Lonergan actually aims to renew traditional Catholic thought by combining its insights with those of modern history and science. Lonergan is thoroughly modern in his emphasis on the subject, but avoids the relativist dangers inherent in this approach by seeking, just as classical philosophers sought an account of the objective world, an objectification of the subject's consciousness. The fundamental goal of this process is an "understanding of understanding," an 'insight into insight'; or, if one defines knowledge as "the fact, state, or condition of understanding,"⁵⁰ Lonergan's goal is a knowledge of what knowledge is.⁵¹ To achieve this understanding, Lonergan aims to "go behind the procedures of the natural sciences to something both more general and more fundamental, namely the procedures of the human mind"; in these procedures, Lonergan argues, one can "discern a transcendental method, that is, a basic pattern of operations employed in every cognitional enterprise."⁵² According to Lonergan, the basic pattern of operations common to all human consciousness falls into "four successive, related, but qualitatively different levels":

the empirical level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move ... an intellectual level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have

understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression ... the rational level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgement on the truth or falsity, certainty, or probability, of a statement ... the responsible level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.⁵³

Similar to the way Socrates, Aristotle, and Aquinas inquire about the objective world, Lonergan examines the data of conscious mental acts and argues that human subjects move from level to level by each time asking a different kind of question. After the initial data of experience, one moves to the second level, and gains insight by asking a question for intelligence--the Aristotelian question "Quid sit?" or "what is it?". Then one moves to the third level by asking a question for reflection, "An sit?" or "is it?".⁵⁴ Conscious operations on all three levels constitute knowledge, so that not experience or data alone, and not just insightful formulations of ideas, but also judgements on the validity of those ideas are required in order to establish a fact. Understanding the conscious operations involved at each level is the focus of Insight, while Method develops the process by making clear that the fourth level, value, is itself "a transcendental notion," being "what is intended in questions for deliberation, just as the intelligible is what is intended in questions for intelligence, and just as truth and being are what are intended in questions for reflection." Most importantly, at this fourth level, one asks whether something "is truly and not merely apparently good."⁵⁵

Lonergan's cognitional analysis is not a descriptive psychology, but is rather an intentionality analysis similar to Husserl's, though without the emphasis on eliminating presuppositions. Rather, practical experience of intellectual and moral knowledge leads Lonergan to establish normative principles which correspond to the four intended levels of the mind: "be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible."⁵⁶ Lonergan calls these principles "transcendental precepts," or simply "positions" which are opposed to the "counter-positions" of any epistemological or ethical theory that denies their necessity in coming to know the truth.⁵⁷ Yet the practice of the "transcendental precepts" is not certain and is imperfect, for there do exist "flights from insight" in which the precepts are ignored. It thus becomes the central purpose of Lonergan's philosophy to promote conversion to an authentic application of the positions. Such conversion is normally not found in an instantaneous epiphany, but is rather an ongoing struggle, a

process. When significant progress is made, one also achieves some understanding of what is perhaps the most distinctive principle of Lonergan's philosophy: self-transcendent intellectual and moral objectivity, a knowledge of truth and value, is the "fruit of authentic subjectivity"; to put this key principle in another way, objectivity in any human endeavour "is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, genuine responsibility."⁵⁸

Understanding each precept, like each level of the mind, requires further explanation, but immediately it can be said that--in stark contrast to the numerous contemporary philosophies which regard the human subject as ceaselessly changing--for Lonergan the human "subject in his conscious, unobjectified attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility" is "the rock on which one can build" the foundations of knowledge; "the point to the labour of objectifying the subject and his conscious operations is that thereby one begins to learn what these are and that they are."⁵⁹ Lonergan thus writes "as a humanist,"⁶⁰ for he continually invites his human readers to engage in acts of "self-appropriation" in which they ask whether the conscious mental operations described are also occurring in their own minds. Indeed, the positions provide the goal and standard of the authentic objectivity for which the subject strives:

Not only do the transcendental notions promote the subject to full consciousness and direct him to his goals. They also provide the criteria that reveal whether the goals are being reached. The drive to understand is satisfied when understanding is reached but it is dissatisfied with every incomplete attainment and so it is the source of ever further questions. The drive to truth compels rationality to assent when evidence is sufficient but refuses assent and demands doubt whenever evidence is insufficient. The drive to value rewards success in self-transcendence with a happy conscience and saddens failure with an unhappy conscience.⁶¹

Lonergan's criteria for self-transcendence seem vague, but are deliberately so. As Frederick Crowe explains, rather than grounding a theory of knowledge and value upon some abstract principle which is bound to be incomplete, "Insight takes its epistemological stand on the 'natural inevitabilities and spontaneities' of the mind," while Method takes its corresponding epistemological stand on "the demands of the human spirit."⁶² Lonergan's sense of the "natural" includes the divine, a point to which I shall return, but here the more important point is the

dynamic character of Lonergan's epistemology. For though Lonergan's approach does recognize some situations in which "understanding is reached" or "evidence is sufficient," his recognition of the inevitability of "ever further questions" reflects the influence of Christian humanism, which traditionally emphasizes St. Paul's reminder that "we know in part" (1 Cor. 13: 12) and can have, in this world, only a limited understanding of truth. This does not imply, as postmodernists often claim, that truth is contextual. For Lonergan, truth is simply reality itself, which cannot be confined within any ideology. Human doubt, error, and lies, on this view, are simply part of the Truth of the human condition, though each of these conditions raises different human ethical issues. The key question, perhaps, is whether and how humans might learn enough truth about Truth to make these conditions momentarily blinding rather than habitually enslaving; in other words, can we "know the truth" that "shall set [us] free" (John 8:32)?

Lonergan's approach to truth and value is often called a "generalized empirical method" or "critical realism."⁶³ If it sounds at first like common sense, it is, like Aristotle's philosophy, intended as such. Though seemingly simple, Lonergan's approach to knowledge is a subtly nuanced response to the Western philosophical tradition. His pragmatism, for example (which follows Newman's A Grammar of Assent) is the polar opposite of Cartesian skepticism which begins by doubting everything and finally affirms only the vague, "I think" as the basis for metaphysics. Lonergan affirms a much longer, more specific list of mental operations,⁶⁴ and hopes to stimulate in his readers not introspection, "which is a myth based on mistaken analogy of cognitional events to ocular vision,"⁶⁵ but rather a "pragmatic engagement in the process of knowing."⁶⁶ This process demonstrates that "the ultimate basis of our knowing is not necessity but contingent fact, and the fact is established, not prior to our engagement in knowing, but simultaneously with it."⁶⁷ Lonergan's approach also calls for a polemical attack on other theories of knowledge which deny the reality of the positions, a process he calls "reversing the counter-position"; in essence, the reversal consists of showing that, while sometimes denying the existence of the positions in their own theory of knowledge, most epistemologies employ them in their own practice. Reversing counter-positions brings out the self-destructiveness of many forms of skepticism, as in the case of Hume's rigorous empiricism, which "thought the human mind to be a matter of instances linked together by custom. But Hume's own mind was quite original. Therefore, Hume's own mind was not what Hume considered the actual human mind to be."⁶⁸

Against the charge that Lonergan's view of knowledge is simply another form of ideology, a Lonerganian would simply point to the data of their opponents' arguments and readily show them adverting to data, forming insights, and making judgements, whether or not these judgements are valid. For example, even if one accepts Foucault's view that in some societies knowledge is nothing but an expression of power, one can readily find evidence in his writings of the cognitional processes that, on Lonergan's view, truly constitute knowledge.⁶⁹ Before summarizing many of the forms of skepticism "reversed" by his own positions, Lonergan first asks if the "multilevelled subject" posited by his own approach exists:

Each man has to answer that question for himself. But I do not think the answers are in doubt. Not even behaviourists claim that they are unaware whether or not they see or hear, taste or touch. Not even positivists preface their lectures and their books with the frank avowal that never in their lives did they have the experience of understanding anything whatever. Not even relativists claim that never in their lives did they have the experience of making a rational judgement. Not even determinists claim that never in their lives did they have the experience of making a responsible choice. There exist subjects that are empirically, intellectually, rationally, morally conscious.⁷⁰

Of course, there are human subjects who are not conscious on one or more of the transcendental levels. Radical Nietzschean skepticism does deny the reality known by even the senses,⁷¹ but 'being out of one's senses' is, properly, another way of describing an absence of mental health. In short, while solipsism or other neuroses are a possible form of human mental life, they are neither healthy, authentic, nor conducive to future human life. Nietzsche's wisdom, it is instructive to remember, leads him to death in an insane asylum.

As strongly as Lonergan denies skepticism, he equally rejects the myth that knowledge can be acquired simply by "taking a look" at reality, a position he characterizes as "naive realism." "Critical realism," by contrast, "explains what knowing is and how it takes place."⁷² The human mind, according to Lonergan, is actively engaged in any knowledge producing activity, whether by using previous understanding or its cognitive capacities to explain the meaning of any object or event. When questions and hypotheses produce understanding, an insight has been achieved. Conversely, some datum reveals that certain questions are unanswerable, an understanding that Lonergan calls an "inverse insight."⁷³ Either form of insight is more difficult to achieve in some

situations than in others, and Lonergan distinguishes fundamentally between the “world of immediacy” and the world “mediated by meaning.”⁷⁴ The former is the world of sense, Lonergan's first level, and is the world affirmed to be real by empiricism and materialism. It is also, however, the world of infancy that all of us begin to outgrow as we develop language, learn about the mental world of others, and learn to ask the transcendental questions; we then enter the world “mediated by meaning,” the world of human persons, music, physics, math, literature, art, and, for theists, God.⁷⁵ That this world exists has caused idealists from Plato to Berkeley to claim that it alone is real; but in its naive form the unpredictability and harshness of material reality easily disproves idealism. In the critical idealism of Kant, however, the categories of the mind are so articulately detailed that they seemingly account for all of what we know of the world of appearances, without ever allowing us to know the “noumena” or “thing-in-itself” of reality.⁷⁶

The means beyond the impasse of idealism, Lonergan believes, is the third transcendental level, reflection. Here one seeks to judge whether the hypotheses offered about reality are indeed real. According to Lonergan, the authentic means by which humans are able to make judgements is quite similar to Popper's view that any knowledge claim must be tested by repeated attempts at falsification.⁷⁷ Yet Lonergan clearly affirms that, for some questions, knowledge of reality and truth can actually be achieved rather than only tentatively affirmed. Judgement is possible, Lonergan believes, because learning is a “self-correcting process” that reaches its “limit in familiarity and mastery.”⁷⁸ This pragmatic process is dynamic but potentially reaches a conclusion and thus “breaks the vicious circle” in which contemporary skepticism sees humanity trapped; as Lonergan puts it,

it is the process of learning that breaks the vicious circle. Judgement on the correctness of insights supposes the prior acquisition of a large number of correct insights. But the prior insights are not correct because we judge them to be correct. They occur within a self-correcting process in which the shortcomings of each insight provoke further questions to yield complementary insights. Moreover, this self-correcting process tends to a limit. We become familiar with concrete situations ... and we can recognize when ... that self-correcting process reaches its limit in familiarity with the concrete situation and in easy mastery of it.⁷⁹

Lonergan's optimism also acknowledges that “probable judgements” are possible when probable

though still yet insufficient evidence lends an “approximation” of the same process.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Lonergan’s realism acknowledges cases in which lack of evidence means that “we can only acknowledge our ignorance.”⁸¹ Other qualifications are necessary, but at the very least it can be affirmed that Lonergan’s emphasis on judgement provides an “essential difference” from Kant’s in that

the process of checking [against data] reveals in human knowledge, beyond experience and understanding, a third, distinct, constitutive level that is both self-authenticating and decisive ... once that grasp has occurred, one cannot be reasonable and yet fail to pass judgement.⁸²

Above all, Lonergan’s epistemology restores the knower’s dependence on fact for, as he says, our knowledge “is only what is so in fact; and the universal relevance of fact in this sense both corrects pre-Kantian rationalism and excludes post-Kantian idealism.”⁸³

Lonergan’s understanding of “fact” also allows a clear, achievable conception of ‘objective knowledge,’ which is not that which “is independent of the concrete existing subject”; rather, the objective includes all that does exist, and knowing whether what exists in one’s mind also exists outside of one’s self is reached through a “self-transcendence” that must include the subject’s participation.⁸⁴ Again, Lonergan stresses that objective knowledge “is not just seeing,” but rather comes through “the compounded criteria of experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing.”⁸⁵ Still, the difference in the ease with which the objective can be known so greatly differs from the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning that Lonergan makes further distinctions. In the former world, “the necessary and sufficient condition of objectivity is to be a successfully functioning animal,”⁸⁶ though in some human activities, such as boxing, objective reality is continually and immediately imposed upon the conscious subject, at least while he is still conscious. By contrast,

in the world mediated by meaning, objectivity has three components. There is the experiential objectivity constituted by the givenness of the data of sense and the data of consciousness. There is the normative objectivity constituted by the exigencies of intelligence and reasonableness. There is the absolute objectivity that results from combining the results of experiential and normative objectivity so that through

experiential objectivity conditions are fulfilled while through normative objectivity conditions are linked to what they condition.⁸⁷

Although the complex world mediated by meaning makes absolute objectivity more difficult to arrive at than in the world of immediacy, especially in the interpretation of texts and even more so in the writing of the complex reality that was history, objectivity remains “the fruit of the authentic subjectivity” that is constituted by genuine attentiveness to data and the asking of relevant questions of intelligence and reasonableness.⁸⁸

It may yet be asked, however, if the ‘self’-directed character of Lonergan’s approach leaves it open to the charge of being individualistic, “perspectival” and hence relativistic. Several added elements in Lonergan’s epistemology guard against this, although in his discussion of hermeneutics in Method he at first seems to invite such critiques by affirming Gadamer’s view that interpreters interpret within limited “horizons” that make “perspectivism” inevitable.⁸⁹ But, Lonergan insists, perspectivism is not relativism, which “has lost hope about the attainment of truth,” and it “does not refer to differences arising from human fallibility.”⁹⁰ Rather, Lonerganian perspectivism accepts that some differences between respective interpreters are momentarily inevitable, but also affirms that the principle by which differences might be overcome lies in the fundamental change of horizon in which one undergoes a conversion to the ‘positions’ that allow authentic subjectivity to move toward a grasp of objective truth.⁹¹ The difficulty of achieving such conversion is also faced squarely by Lonergan, however, through the importance he assigns to the problem of bias. Whether the bias of “unconscious motivation,” “individual egoism,” or “the more powerful and blinder bias of group egoism,” bias “is a block or distortion of intellectual development” that can only be overcome by authentic application of the positions.⁹² Each subject will learn, one hopes, to recognize his or her more likely sources of bias, and strive to avoid its negative effects. Yet aspects of one’s own cultural inheritance may also be true and valuable, depending on the extent to which the tradition one inherits is itself founded upon truth and value.⁹³ Judging the authenticity of tradition is thus crucial, and, acknowledging the likelihood of bias, Lonergan distinguishes “a minor authenticity of the person regarding faithfulness to the tradition that nourishes him or her, and a major authenticity that is able to justify or condemn the tradition itself when the failures of individuals become the norm.”⁹⁴ Like perspectivism, then, bias

embedded in unauthentic tradition is not an insurmountable obstacle for humans to know truth, so long as one's positions are open to recognizing the truths offered by authentic tradition. Particularly for "the world mediated by meaning," knowledge is "known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgements of the community."⁹⁴ According to Lonergan, it is over time, through one's community, that humanity "achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."⁹⁵ Finally, whether in epistemology, metaphysics, or ethics, at the level of judgement

self-transcendence takes on a new meaning. Not only does it go beyond the subject but also it seeks what is independent of the subject. For a judgement that this or that is so reports, not what appears to me, not what I imagine, not what I think, not what I wish, not what I would be inclined to say, not what seems to me, but what is so."⁹⁷

Lonergan's Ethics and Theory of Value

Lonergan's conception of moral conversion is fundamentally similar to intellectual conversion, and likewise involves an acceptance of the dynamic exigencies of the human person. Achievement of moral self-transcendence thus follows a pattern similar to cognitive self-transcendence. One first needs "knowledge of reality and especially of human reality," particularly "of the probable consequences of projected courses of action," and then one "asks questions leading to self-transcendence."⁹⁸ To address the first requirement, Method offers a general theory of the human good, beginning with the paradox that "what is good is always concrete"; yet, since "definitions are abstract," it is difficult to define the good. Nevertheless, Lonergan does distinguish "skills, feelings, values, beliefs, cooperation, progress, and decline" as "various components that enter into the human good."⁹⁹ Of these, though, it is only value which is considered a "transcendental notion."¹⁰⁰ Knowledge of value requires first attending to data, intelligent insight, and finally rational judgement. Lonergan notes that "judgements of value differ in content ... from judgements of fact," since one can disapprove of what does exist, but they do not differ "in structure" because in both cases questions must continue until one arrives at a judgement which is "independent of the subject: judgements of fact state or purport to state what is or is not so; judgements of value state or purport to state what is or is not truly good or really better."¹⁰¹ Lonergan's moral theory is not idealistic, however, since beyond judgements of value, he also

argues that there yet exists a “fullness of moral self-transcendence” that must be sought for since “man can know what is right without doing it.”¹⁰²

How we know that moral self-transcendence exists, then, is a crucial problem, and here Lonergan argues that the criteria for judgement differ in questions of value from questions of intellect, which normally revert to impersonal matters such as the evidence of data or the formal validity of logic. In explaining this point, Lonergan first appeals to the controversial notion of a universal human moral nature, saying that “we are so endowed that we ... not only can recognize correct answers constitutive of intentional self-transcendence, but also respond with the stirring of our very being when we glimpse the possibility or the actuality of moral self-transcendence.”¹⁰³ Of course, these responses occur only during the process of moral conversion, and crucial evidence in this process arises from “apprehensions of value,” which lie “intermediate between judgements of fact and judgements of value,” and which “are given in feelings.”¹⁰⁴ Examples of such apprehensions, which are distinct from “ambiguous” objects that may be “only apparently good or bad,” occur when one “greet[s] either the ontic value of a person or the qualitative value of beauty, of understanding, of truth, of noble deeds, of virtuous acts, of great achievements”;¹⁰⁵ a Shakespearean, here, cannot help but think of Gloucester who, though blind, is able to see “feelingly” how “this world goes” (*Lr.* 4.5.144-45). Paradoxically, it is the authentic, the actual feelings within a person’s heart which objectively show that the “drive to value rewards success in self-transcendence with a happy conscience and saddens failure with an unhappy conscience.”¹⁰⁶ Thankfully, contrary to the common tendency to accept as normative whatever one initially feels, the process of moral conversion allows feelings to grow towards authenticity:

conversion is a change of direction and, indeed, a change for the better. One frees oneself from the unauthentic. One grows in authenticity. Harmful, dangerous, misleading satisfactions are dropped. Fears of discomfort, pain, privation have less power to deflect one from one’s course. Values are apprehended where before they were overlooked. Scales of preference shift. Errors, rationalizations, ideologies fall and shatter to leave one open to things as they are and to man as he should be.¹⁰⁷

Of course, as with the flights from cognitional realism, there are also the “mistaken endeavours to quiet an uneasy conscience by ignoring, belittling, denying, rejecting higher values.”¹⁰⁸ Even for persons not engaged in such practices, there comes the realization that, because they “are sinners”

subject to “inattention, oversights, irrationality, irresponsibility,” they too must learn that “the task of repentance and conversion is life-long.”¹⁰⁹ Even for many lifelong criminals, this dynamic process eventually leads most people to an apprehension of value through feelings. As well, there is also an awareness of ‘disvalue’ which is known by people within their hearts, even when whole societies legitimate immoral forms of behaviour. As Lonergan puts it:

the development of knowledge and the development of moral feeling lead to the existential discovery, the discovery of oneself as a moral being, the realization that one not only chooses between courses of action but also thereby makes oneself an authentic human being or an unauthentic one. With that discovery, there emerges in consciousness the significance of personal value and the meaning of personal responsibility. One’s judgements of value are revealed as the door to one’s fulfilment or to one’s loss.¹¹⁰

Lonergan on the Relationship of Truth and Value

The ethical drive to moral self-transcendence and objective value is also, it is crucial to note, itself fundamentally “responsible for proper functioning on the first three levels,” however, so that the authenticity of self-transcendence in fact grounds Lonergan’s entire approach. As Method makes clear, while the four cognitive levels are “successive,” they are also “interdependent,” and for them to operate properly, one must hold

not only in theory but also in practice, that it is worth while to get things straight, to know with exactitude, to contribute to the advancement of science. So at the root of all method there has to be presupposed a level of operations on which we evaluate and choose responsibly the method of our operations.¹¹¹

Here again, Lonergan follows the traditional Catholic emphasis upon the ethical intention of the knower, for, in an important sense, “the will is higher than the intellect, and can move it.”¹¹² It is the Hegelian concept of “sublation,” though, that perhaps best expresses the relationship of the fourth level of ethical value to the first three levels of intellectual truth. Lonergan explains sublation by saying,

what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries

them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context."¹³

Hence the fourth level "goes beyond the value, truth, to values generally" and "promotes the subject from cognitional to moral self-transcendence"; but, "this in no way interferes with or weakens [one's] devotion to truth. [Humanity] still needs truth, for [one] must apprehend reality and real potentiality before [one] can deliberately respond to value."¹⁴ Thus all knowledge is in a sense value-laden, but so far from impugning the ability of the first three levels to know reality, the value of authenticity is what grounds the subject's ability to do so.

Since the first three levels are essential for the fourth, any comparison of Lonergan's approach to value with other ethical theories will first of all note its contrast to the Enlightenment view that no "ought" may be derived from "is"; for Lonergan, it is more accurate to say that only from "is" can be derived "ought," for his approach moves from a cognitional theory, to an epistemology, to a metaphysics, and finally to an ethics. Against Frye, Lonergan would assert that the world mediated by meaning is also "motivated by value,"¹⁵ so that "spontaneously, we move from judgements of fact or possibility to judgements of value and to the deliberateness of decision and commitment."¹⁶ This movement is neither externally motivated by ideology nor "unconscious or blind"; rather, "it constitutes us as conscientious, as responsible persons, and its absence would leave us psychopaths."¹⁷ Against Nietzsche, though, Lonergan would argue that the very meaning of the term "value," like "truth," is obscured by adding the qualifier "for me"; just as truth must be the search for what 'is,' so the search for value must be what for what really is valuable, and morally one must find "not just what pleases us, but what truly is good."¹⁸ In sum, with the recognition that the fourth level in many ways "is responsible for proper functioning on the first three levels," there should "vanish two notions" that Enlightenment and Nietzschean ethicists have radically opposed but made equally disastrous for the twentieth century: "the notion of pure intellect or pure reason that operates on its own without guidance or control from responsible decision; and the notion of will as an arbitrary power indifferently choosing between good and evil."¹⁹

On the Significance of Catholic Christianity in Lonergan's Philosophy

As for any Christian, so for Lonergan the transcendent reality of God acts as an ultimate guarantor of objective truth and value, and the proper term for deviance from objective reality is sin. As well, Lonergan's views on value as the door to progress or decline apply as much to

societies as to individuals; thus, his understanding of the interdependence of the transcendental levels requires that judgements of truth and value must always be made within and with regard to a community of likewise responsible persons. For Lonergan, the primary model of community is the Roman Catholic Church. For all of these reasons, Lonergan argues for the fundamental importance of religious as well as intellectual and moral conversion. Does the validity of his entire philosophy therefore rest on the truth or falsity of the Catholic Christian Faith? Does it provide a model only for Catholic Christian believers?

First, it must be recognized that the corollary of Lonergan's views is not, as both Nietzschean atheists announcing the death of God and theists proclaiming God's sovereignty typically go on to argue, that without *belief* in God there is no basis for knowing truth or value. Lonergan's understanding of God's grace in creation expects to find truth and value even among atheists or non-Christian believers, just as St. Augustine's concept of grace causes him to value the "gold and silver" of "Egyptians"¹²⁰ because they too are created by God and--unlike every other kind of knowledge--in the case of God's love it is not true that *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum* (nothing can be loved unless it is also known). Rather, because the reality of God's grace underpins "what is good" in non-Christian religions or ideologies and even allows atheists to "love God in their hearts while not knowing him in their heads,"¹²¹ dialogue with non-Christians is not only justified but is in fact required. As well, the reality of God's common grace means that Nietzschean nihilism is not normative for non-believers. Hence, for Lonergan, the relationship of religious conversion to intellectual and moral acts is, again, one of sublation; thus, with religious conversion in "no way are fruits of intellectual or moral conversion negated or diminished."¹²²

Nevertheless, religious conversion is vital because, although all people can potentially contribute to intellectual and moral development, and all truth is "[our] Lord's,"¹²³ of course none of us always does so. Because "sin abound[s]" (Rom. 5: 20) in the world, religious conversion is crucial to progress:

Men are sinners. If human progress is not to be ever distorted and destroyed by the inattention, oversights, irrationality, irresponsibility of decline, men have to be reminded of their sinfulness. They have to acknowledge their real guilt and amend their ways. They have to learn with humility that religious development is dialectical, and that the task of repentance is life long.¹²⁴

Christianity is an effective response to sin, Lonergan notes, not primarily through argument, but because as “a religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love,” it “will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.”¹²⁵

Christianity also stresses that love cannot be merely humanistic, however, and that in spite of sin “grace abound[s] much more” (Rom. 5: 20). Thus Lonergan also affirms that in God's “other-worldly love,” there “is a new basis for all valuing and all doing good.”¹²⁶ The traditional Christian name for this new basis is faith, which Lonergan defines as “the knowledge born of religious love.”¹²⁷ This knowledge does create a new existential horizon for a Christian, because

Without faith the originating value is man and the terminal value is the human good man brings about. But in the light of faith, originating value is divine light and love, while terminal value is the whole universe.... The power of God's love brings forth a new energy and efficacy in all goodness, and the limit of human expectation ceases to be the grave.¹²⁸

Faith fundamentally alters one's horizon in this world as well, and the power and importance of God's love in Lonergan's theory of value must not be underestimated. God's love is the real, concrete means by which humans caught in a world of sin and suffering can find peace in the difficult quest for intellectual and moral conversion:

Questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation reveal the eros of the human spirit, its capacity and its desire for self-transcendence. But that capacity meets fulfilment, that desire turns to joy, when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love.¹²⁹

Religious conversion thus adds a fifth “position” to the first four transcendental levels. To summarize the full character of Lonerganian conversion, ultimately “total surrender to the demands of the human spirit” requires one to “be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love.”¹³⁰ Making this burden light, however, in stark contrast to the vague insecurity of secular understanding, being “in love” here refers concretely first to the experience of the unconditional gift of God's love (Cf. 1 John 4:10), and only then to the committed love with which the human subject affirms the positions leading to truth and value. The fruit of these positions is a method of

inquiry, as shall be explained, but above all it must be emphasized that “what is paramount” for this “methodical style” is the authenticity of the inquirers, which

can be ensured only if investigators have attained intellectual conversion to renounce the myriad of false philosophies, moral conversion to keep themselves free of individual, group, and general bias, and religious conversion so that each loves the Lord his God with his whole heart and his whole soul and all his mind and all his strength.¹³¹

Lonergan’s emphasis upon conversion is not so esoteric as it might seem. Hirsch also recognizes the critical role played by the health of the individual subject when he argues that “the health of a discipline as a discipline is entirely dependent upon the devoted allegiance of its members to the logic of inquiry.”¹³² Lonergan, as all theistic philosophers must, simply admits that a fundamental part of a subject’s health is one’s continuing attempts to be fully converted not only to truth and goodness, but also to God.

My own scholarship openly affirms, when it is relevant, that I share Lonergan’s religious faith. If Lonergan is right to argue that a critic ought not to stop at understanding but should also continue to the level of evaluation, then an evaluative critic must make clear the ultimate ground for knowing not merely the ‘thing-in-itself,’ but, indeed, the purpose of ‘life in itself.’ As Hirsch puts it, the “sanction” for “most of the criticism that is worth terming evaluation at all” comes “entirely from the religious, moral, and aesthetic standpoint which sponsors such criteria as estimable values.”¹³³ This is not to be lamented, for “precisely the reason these extrinsic criteria have been productive of significant criticism” is that “they induce judgements of value which transcend the aims of individual works and thereby permit comparative evaluations which have reference to larger dimensions of life.”¹³⁴ Also, unless one wants to simply assert one’s own beliefs, religions as well as the other competing metaphysics must be admitted to any debate about the ultimate value of any work of literature. Rather than this position blinding their interpretative and evaluative capacities, adherents of a religion which considers idolatry damnable ought to be especially wary of bardolatry. Although I love Shakespeare, it is for religious reasons that I reject finding Christian meaning or value in his texts unless it is truly there; of course, if it is, then I may be more likely than a non-Christian critic to consider pointing it out.

Lonergan’s Method and Literary Criticism: The Eight Functional Specialties

Even if one accepts Lonergan's positions, one must articulate clearly the impact they might have upon any particular literary critic or upon literary criticism in general. In an important sense, accepting Lonerganian critical realism as a foundation of literary criticism merely commits the literary critic to a process in which, guided by the ethic of authenticity, first questions of the true meaning of a text are raised; the resulting answers then provide a basis for asking questions whose answers will suggest something of the value that the text might have. Literary criticism, when guided by Lonergan's transcendental notions of truth and value, can then become a science not in the limited contemporary sense of the methods employed by the physical sciences, but rather a "scientia" or knowledge of both the human meaning and real value of the literature being studied.¹³⁵ The "transcendental notions" or "positions" are held by Lonergan to be universally authentic in humans, but they do not inhibit dialogue with critics who don't share his understanding of truth, value, or the relation between the two. Rather, Lonergan's positions require dialogue with any critics who are also approaching literature's complex mediation of meaning by attending to the data of literature, asking questions of intelligence, striving to make judgements, and positing why a text might be valuable. Literary critics often neglect one or more of these activities, but if they are engaged in none of them it must be asked why one would consider their work literary criticism at all.

Given such a general process, one might ask why the question of religion need be raised at all by literary critics, whose subject--unlike Lonergan's--is literature rather than theology. Although one's fundamental attitude to facts, values, and the nature of knowledge can only be derived from philosophy, Frye is right to warn that to "subordinate criticism to an externally derived critical attitude is to exaggerate the values in literature that can be related to the external source."¹³⁶ Nevertheless, it can also be the case that one's own values prevent one from the apprehension of values in literature, especially given the complexity and variety of human value systems. Lonergan makes few references to literature but, by accepting Schlegel's definition of the classic as "a writing that is never fully understood,"¹³⁷ he affirms that even his own epistemology expects to produce limited knowledge, and emphasizes that the interpreter must strive for self-transcendence even to understand literature:

The major texts, the classics, in religion, letters, philosophy, theology, not only are beyond the initial horizon of their interpreters but also may demand an intellectual,

moral, religious conversion of the interpreter over and above the broadening of his horizon. In this case the interpreter's initial knowledge of the object is just inadequate. He will come to know it only in so far as he pushes the self-correcting process of learning to a revolution in his own outlook.¹³⁸

Even while acknowledging one's bias, then, finally it is of the utmost importance to systematically achieve self-transcendence. Of practical necessity, one must seek out the insights of others and enter the communal world of scholarship. Insight into how one might do this in the human sciences is provided by the method Lonergan outlines for theology, which may be briefly outlined before suggesting how a similar method might be used in literary criticism.

Lonergan defines method as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."¹³⁹ Lonergan's theological method outlines eight "functional specialties" relevant to theology, four for a "mediating" phase in which theologians discover what religious events or documents have meant in the past, and four for a "mediated" phase in which theologians state what these ought to mean today. Not coincidentally, the four parts in each phase correspond roughly to the four transcendental levels, though in inverse ascending then descending order. First, ascending the four levels to know the past, one requires "*research* that uncovers and makes available the data," "*interpretation* that understands their meaning," "*history* that judges and narrates what occurred," and "*dialectic*" in which positions based on fundamentally differing intellectual, moral, or religious horizons are described and evaluated.¹⁴⁰ Then, descending the four levels to present theology today, at *foundations* the subject "makes a fully conscious decision about one's horizon,"¹⁴¹ which gives the basis for the judgement of *doctrines* that are then clarified through the insights of *systematics* and presented as the data of education in *communications*.¹⁴² Each specialty has its own distinct goals, and within each specialty one level may have priority, but Lonergan stresses both that scholars specializing in one field still employ "all four of the [transcendental] levels" in each specialty.¹⁴³ Also, he stresses that the specialties are interdependent,¹⁴⁴ and that effective theology requires communal scholarship.

As one philosopher who has applied this method to philosophy puts it, Lonergan's eight functional specialties "may be used to structure any discipline that investigates a cultural past in order to constitute and guide a culture's future."¹⁴⁵ The method's distinguishing of functional

specialities guards against, as Frye would fear, the possibility of a theological method being grafted onto literature, even while the reality of the transcendental precepts reveals that many of the same cognitive acts performed by theologians are performed by literary critics. Nevertheless, to maximize the method's effectiveness in literary criticism, one must first ask a key question of intelligence: what is literature?

The need for critics to answer this question in order to be able to select the texts of their studies seems obvious, but several factors have conspired to make an answer seem practically superfluous. Literary studies as a professional university discipline has existed only since the nineteenth century, a time in which the most common meaning of the term "literature" was "imaginative" writing as distinguished from "true" writing about the historical world. This usage has made it likely that both formulators of university curricula and the average person seem intuitively to know that works such as "poems by Keats" are literature, while "reports from Science magazine are not."¹⁴⁶ E.D. Hirsch notes, however, that a test might also be devised, including "letters by Matthew Arnold," "histories by McCauley," or "biographies by Boswell," which would produce results "anything but unanimous and reassuring."¹⁴⁷ Such difficulties lead even the normally rational Hirsch to approve of Wittgenstein's notion that "language and thought require us to use classifications which slip and slide into domains of indispensable vagueness."¹⁴⁸ Hirsch then concludes with the vague, circular notion that "Literature includes any text worthy to be taught to students by teachers of literature," pragmatically adding, "when these texts are not being taught to students in other departments of literature."¹⁴⁹ Like many other theorists in this volume, and like Eagleton,¹⁵⁰ Hirsch seems to want to return to a much older usage of the term "literature." In Cicero, Tertullian, and in the Renaissance understanding of "*humanae litterae*," "literature" refers generally to books as a body of writing on any topic, and more specifically to "books of whatever subject which made an impact."¹⁵¹ This return also appeals, of course, to more radical contemporary theorists such as Barthes¹⁵² or Hayden White, whose *écriture* or "metahistory" eradicates the distinctions between fiction and other kinds of writing, and to proponents of "cultural studies" who want to break down interdisciplinary distinctions within the university.

Interdisciplinary study is essential for understanding this issue, but what is most likely to emerge from such study is a renewed sense of the need to define literature according to Aristotelian

criteria of definition. Particularly, a definition is needed that can “give the *genus* and *differentia* of the thing being defined,” the latter being the “distinguishing characteristic or specific difference of a thing from other things”; a useful *differentia* allows a definition to be “precise,” “not vague” but also “not too broad and not too narrow.”¹⁵³ Is it essential to know the *differentia* of literature? Consider the results if one went to Frankenstein to study biology, or to Gulliver’s Travels for geography, or to The Origin of Species for poetic visions, or, may I ironically add, to Insight for lighthearted entertainment. For though there are inevitably controversial cases, such as Defoe’s Memoirs of a Cavalier or The New Testament, and though the status of some works may change over time, such as Gibbons’ Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, and though some works mix myth and history (as in my view the Bible does), it does seem essential, at least, to say that a *differentia* of non-literary works is that they are not fictional. That is, their subject matter is “located in space and dated in time,” the principle by which Collingwood defined history.¹⁵⁴ Yet stopping with this distinction, as Wellek does, ignores intentionally historical works that still call themselves literature, such as Schindler’s Ark, and offers no defence for literature against the recurring attack, formulated most forcefully by Plato, that poets are liars who write of illusions one step removed from empirical reality and yet another from philosophical truth.¹⁵⁵

It was writing against such a charge that Aristotle found a *differentia* for what he called not literature but rather poetics, one rooted not in vague inclusiveness but rather in the purpose of the activity: *mimesis*. Normally translated into English as ‘imitation,’ today this term is often taken as referring to “a literary work that is understood to be reproducing an external reality,”¹⁵⁶ and hence is limited to the realistic. In Eric Auerbach’s monumental cross-cultural study of the concept, however, *mimesis* refers more generally to the representation of all reality, even fantasy, and hence includes works as unrealistic as those by Rabelais or Virginia Woolf. As Gerald Else has helped to make clear,¹⁵⁷ this broad understanding of the concept is much closer to Aristotle’s understanding of the term, which distinguishes poetry from the realism of history while still allowing it to refer to realistic historical events. In the Poetics, *mimesis* is not simply the imitation of reality but is rather the representation of reality through events that the poet judges to be universally--in the sense of being probably or of necessity--important to humanity, as opposed to the particular events that history must report. Hence the poet has wide options, and may represent things “either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be or to have been, or as they ought to be”;¹⁵⁸ a poet

may thus mix the factual and the imaginary according to the goals of his or her work. Aristotle's emphasis on representation, particularly applicable to drama, also helps Horace formulate the concept of *ut pictura poesis*,¹⁵⁹ and the resulting notion that literature does not explain or analyze but rather enacts reality through the representations of words. Normally--except perhaps for borderline cases such as Montaigne's Essays--this quality of representation allows a *differentia* from philosophy, as Sidney especially emphasized. Indeed, Sidney summarizes most of these arguments in the following definition, which is central to his Defence of Poetry and normative for Renaissance literary theory:

Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth--to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture;¹⁶⁰

With perhaps only minor additions to note the necessity of the human subject as producer of this art, and language as its means (as Aristotle noted), literature or poetry can, even today, be simply but precisely defined: literature is a *mimesis* that uses words concretely or abstractly to represent how humans experience or imagine both themselves and the world.

This definition, founded on the ethical concept of purpose, entails evaluative criteria for both Aristotle and Sidney. First, however, this definition provides the principle of selection by which literary criticism chooses its objects, and the limits which set the words of a text as the data of experience available to criticism. Establishing what these words are thus becomes crucial, and literary criticism must thus engage in Lonergan's first specialty, research. Today this requirement is met primarily by textual criticism and, for drama, the history of performance. In Lonergan's view, textual critics perform the invaluable service of clarifying the data available for interpretation, and the added potential meanings resulting from textual variation are to be welcomed as part of the objective truth and value of the text. While current textual understanding is always subject to revision, a thoroughly researched text is often intelligible enough to provide data for critically realistic knowledge. Contrary to Stanley Fish and the postmodern understanding of "text" generally, there always is a text in any class in which criticism of a literary work is being honestly pursued, and there is an important sense in which text means nothing other than the black words that are on the white page.

Of course, these words are merely the data of the world of immediacy, and the complex

mediation of meaning found in literature raises more difficult hermeneutic questions than do the theological texts which Lonergan normally considers. This complexity is caused by the *differentia* of literature, its capacity to represent both human imagination and the vast varieties of human conceptions of reality that are also present in the writings judged to be narratives of history or of scripture. Nevertheless, Lonerganian critical realism can provide a general hermeneutic applicable, in many ways, to any text. Most fundamentally, Lonergan reminds us that interpretation "is just a particular case of knowing ... knowing what is meant."¹⁶¹ From this it follows "that confusion about knowing leads to confusion about interpreting," and that understanding of a text's mediation of meaning can never be, as much contemporary discussion suggests, a question of hermeneutics alone.¹⁶² Rather, knowledge of a text can only be achieved when an interpreter authentically employs all four transcendental levels to understand the text.

The first general principle which Lonerganian critical realism can offer an interpreter, after he or she has selected a text for exegesis, is to reject the notion that "all an interpreter has to do is to look at a text and see what is there."¹⁶³ For though Lonergan sensibly acknowledges that exegesis is unnecessary for texts that are "systematic in conception and execution" or which consist of "commonsense statements" which "have a perfectly obvious meaning" within a given community, many texts illustrate that

statements may be transported to other communities distant in place or in time. Horizons, values, interests, intellectual development, experience may differ. Expression may have intersubjective, artistic, symbolic components that appear strange. Then there arises the question, what is meant by the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, the book. Many answers seem possible, and none seems quite satisfactory. Such in general is the problem of interpretation.¹⁶⁴

Thus the complexity of meaning--which Lonergan considers "a fundamental category"¹⁶⁵ within the human sciences and to which he devotes an entire background chapter in Method--requires that an interpreter bring not an "empty head" to a text but rather a knowledge base that allows questions of intelligence to be asked and insights proposed. Most fundamentally, an interpreter "cannot begin to interpret the text unless he knows the language in which it is written" and "the objects to which that language refers," and so "the greater the exegete's resources" the greater one's ability to "enumerate all possible interpretations."¹⁶⁶ Such understanding requires, however, "the enormous

labour of becoming a scholar," and would be futile without communal scholarship and the possibility, as with any kind of knowing, of the "self-correcting process of learning" which compels one to "sustain one's reading and rereading until one's inventiveness or good luck have eliminated one's failures in comprehension."¹⁶⁷ This process normally brings the interpreter "to an understanding of the common sense of another place, time, culture, and cast of mind," and very often it is precisely a common sense understanding of another culture which is represented in literature.¹⁶⁸ Yet Lonergan's hermeneutic also recognizes that artistic meaning can "appear strange,"¹⁶⁹ and each text must therefore be considered individually. Unlike deconstruction and many other hermeneutics, Lonergan's approach does not demand assent to a general theory of the linguistic sign or artistic symbol. Rather, each interpreter must attend to the possible ways in which any given text may signify meaning.

Yet since no text has ever appeared out of thin air nor become significant without being seen or read by others, Lonergan's critical realism requires that the interpreter acknowledge that every text has an author and an initial as well as potential audience. Theories such as the "death of the author"¹⁷⁰ or the "affective fallacy"¹⁷¹ must therefore be rejected because they *a priori* exclude potential means by which the meaning of a text might be understood. Again, the varied modes of *mimesis* available to a literary author require the literary critic to consider each case of the author, text, and audience relationship individually; normally, all three must be investigated fully in order to grasp potential insights. The interpreter thus "moves out of one's initial horizon" to "a fuller horizon that includes a significant part of the author's."¹⁷² Context is thus a crucial hermeneutic concept, one which seems infinitely to expand:

Heuristically, then, the context of the word is the sentence. The context of the sentence is the paragraph. The context of the paragraph is the chapter. The context of the chapter is the book. The context of the book is the author's *opera omnia*, his life and times, the state of the question in his day, his problems, prospective readers, scope and aim.¹⁷³

Again, it is the *differentia* of literature which makes literary contexts so complex, even though at first glance the literary critic might seem able to avoid the crucial judgements of historical fact essential for theology. In fact, literature can represent not only fictional sources and symbols but also history, and the literary author and audience are themselves historical. Therefore, numerous

judgements of history become essential to critical attempts to judge meaning. As Lonergan acknowledges in his two chapters on history, "historical reality is far too complicated for an exhaustively complete description ever to occur,"¹⁷⁴ and the inevitably resultant perspectivism makes it unsurprising that many literary critics attempt simply to offer possible insight into a text's meaning rather than striving for judgements of a literary text's meaning.

Again, however, perspectivism for the interpreter, historian, or literary critic need not be relativism. Even while acknowledging the infinite interpretability of a classic, Lonergan also quotes Schlegel's qualification that "those that are educated and educate themselves must always want to learn more from the classic."¹⁷⁵ Again, Lonergan's understanding of judgement suggests how this occurs, for systematic insights can gradually grasp the meaning of part of a classic text:

context is the interweaving of questions and answers in limited groups. To answer any one question will give rise to further questions. To answer them will give rise to still more. But, while this process can recur a number of times, while it might go on indefinitely if one keeps changing the topic, still it does not go on indefinitely on one and the same topic ... there comes a point in an investigation when no further relevant questions arise, and then the possibility of judgement has emerged.¹⁷⁶

As Hirsch has emphasized in his attempt to make meaning objective of an interpreter's own values, the content of a literary critic's judgement of meaning will include many human values or 'disvalues' intrinsic to a literary work,¹⁷⁷ such as the understanding of jealousy that a character such as Othello gains, and the understanding of jealousy provided by *Othello* as a whole. Judgements of meaning thus do not make the fourth transcendental level a priority, but they do require at least an apprehension of values that may simply be "beyond the initial horizon" of the interpreters. As Lonergan notes, in complex cases of artistic meaning the interpreter requires "some capacity to feel what the author felt and to respect the values that the author respected."¹⁷⁸ Just as Aristotle's theory of *catharsis* requires apprehension of feelings, criticism also requires an apprehension of values. On Lonergan's view, values are often apprehended through feelings, but for either to be apprehended does require at least enough moral, and possibly religious, conversion to apprehend those feelings and values that are expressed within the work of literature. The interpreter must therefore "be critical not merely of his author but also of the tradition that has formed in his own mind."¹⁷⁹ The need for "understanding oneself" thus creates an "existential dimension" for

hermeneutics, and an “intellectual, moral, religious conversion of the interpreter” may be required. Its absence, Lonergan believes, “lies at the very root of the perennial divisions of mankind in their views on reality, morality, and religion,”¹⁸⁰ and thus at the root of hermeneutic divisions over texts which themselves vividly portray human reality.

Understanding such divisions and appreciating the complexities of value systems is normally the province, for Lonergan, of *dialectic*, which seeks to bring “to light” fundamentally conflicting horizons, and “to provide a technique that objectifies subjective differences and promotes conversion.”¹⁸¹ Dialectic is partly descriptive, assembling fundamentally differing views to reveal the basis of their differences, yet finally it is critical, as the dialectician’s “objectification of subjectivity”¹⁸² reveals some views as “positions” compatible with conversion, others as incompatible “counterpositions.” Within Lonergan’s theological method this specialty is a prelude to foundations. In this functional specialty, after having been “illuminated by the manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic,” one makes “a fully conscious decision about one’s horizon, one’s outlook, one’s world-view”¹⁸³ before making judgements of doctrine. Doctrines may have a counterpart in literary criticism as judgements of value, but given the difficulty of avoiding bias and separating one’s own values from the values in a literary text, perhaps criticism requires a “dialectic of meaning” before a judgement is made about the meaning of any work of literature.

A final, foundational judgement of the value of any work of literature also requires a dialectic of evaluative viewpoints, however, for similar reasons. First, because the fourth level of evaluation is interdependent with the first three, its prerequisite is the judgement of meaning attained by the first three levels. Especially for literary criticism, since literature often presents beliefs or values that differ radically from one’s own, it is essential to preserve some ability to distinguish between a valid understanding of an opposing view and a final judgement of the value of that view, which includes the broadest horizons of the interpreter. Again helpful here is the distinction between apprehensions of value and judgements of value; while the former are vital to the judgement of meaning, in the latter the apprehended feeling or value is placed within the critic’s broadest judgements of value, his or her broadest horizons. To take a common literary example, for any critic properly to understand a tragedy, he or she must apprehend feelings approximating pity and fear; however, the value of these feelings will be determined by value judgements within the critic’s broadest horizons, horizons determined by conversion. Dialectic can provide the

suggestions of other critics as to the possible value of a literary work, but finally it is the individual critic who must make a foundational judgement of its value.

For literary critics organizing a dialectic of value as a prelude to the judgement of value, again it is the mimetic nature of literature which suggests the kind of evaluative questions that should be asked. Because literature can represent historical truth, but need not, and may have some other philosophical, political, or aesthetic goal, there are probably no better criteria of the value of literature than those articulated by the mimetic based theory of Sidney: does the work “teach and and delight”?¹⁸⁴ As Hirsch notes, this “old formula is more adequate to the character of literary value than many another up-to-date critical formulation.”¹⁸⁵ So familiar are these broad “ends” of literature that they seem stodgy or clichéd, but in principle they are inclusive, perhaps because of their origin in rhetoric in which they were the “ends” of any speaker, of any more specific purpose that might be proposed for literature. Feminist criticism may teach the evil of patriarchy, Marxist criticism the nature of class struggle, New or Old Historicism the nature of history, but all teach. In varying degrees, most forms of criticism will also seek to describe how the literary text in question works to convey some non-textual reality, or in many cases is more moving and delightful than the non-textual reality which is being taught. Such inclusiveness is essential if a dialectic of value is to avoid becoming either narrowly moralistic and reductive of the varied truths and pleasures that literature can represent, or so aesthetically dominated that human realities represented in a text are ignored or belittled.

However, so many factors might potentially enter the debate about the value of a given work of literature that judgement can become very difficult. As with meaning, it must be remembered that multiple objective values are likely to be affirmed; even then, only part of the work’s potential objective value is likely to be found. The character of a work’s *mimesis* will again determine which of the broad criteria are most crucial to the judgements of a work’s value, but in most cases literature’s value must be judged according to some combination of whether its truths teach truth, whether its emotions and values move one to emotions and values that truly are valuable, and whether it entertains in a manner that ignites the intangible human emotion known as delight. Yet the representation of human error alone can also be valuable, even when, as with The Merchant of Venice’s antisemitism, the work does not show within itself the consequences of the error, for a critic’s broader values can classify it as such; as Shakespeare elsewhere puts it, “There

is some soul of goodness in things evil / Would men observingly distill it out" (H5 4.1.4). Indeed it is the character of much literature, and part of its subtle power to move, that its potential to teach is often not spelled out within the work itself and instead requires completion by the audience or reader. This normally subjective, personal process can be made subject to critical scrutiny through the "objectification of subjectivity"¹⁸⁶ sought by dialectic, and can allow alternative viewpoints to increase the possibility of self-transcendent value judgements. Such value judgements will always abstract to some degree the literary work itself, but intellectual conversion and its resultant interpretation of an artist's mediation of meaning must guide the critic in judging the nature of the truth literature conveys.

Genre is particularly important here, for like those who go to literature looking strictly for scientific or historical truths, those going to fantasy looking for psychological realism are likely to be disappointed and misvalue the work. Such judgements can only be rejected by an appeal to the first three transcendental levels and their judgement of meaning. In addition to requiring an encounter between a work's meaning and those horizons that are determined by intellectual, moral and religious conversion to human authenticity, the attempt to make literary judgements also seems, then, to require a subdivision of intellectual conversion; one might, following Lonergan, call this "aesthetic conversion"¹⁸⁷ or, simply, the experience of beauty. In literary criticism, fidelity to the potential variety of aesthetic meaning requires an openness to beauty similar to that sought by the other transcendental notions. An accurate judgement of the value of a literary work depends as much on an appreciation of its aesthetic beauty as value judgements depend on an accurate understanding of truth. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but as with many other values the capacity to improve the quality of one's vision, to learn to be awed by the truly beautiful and be bored by the mundane art that once seemed beautiful, can be enhanced by an understanding of the nature and variety of aesthetic expression.

Yet while the idiosyncratic human capacity for beauty and delight thankfully enhances the ways in which art can be objectively valuable, in order to offer his or her own work for judgement a literary critic must at some point choose between the options of evaluative dialectic, and justify his or her choice through the foundations of intellectual, moral, religious, or aesthetic conversion. The range and variety of these choices makes it unlikely that literary critics will have the precision which theologians seek to bring to doctrines. However, at least up to the eighteenth-century a

commonplace and analogous term for statements of foundations within literary criticism has been wisdom. The ultimate aim of evaluative literary criticism, perhaps, might best be called wisdom. This aim seems especially appropriate for evaluating Renaissance literature, for in that age Erasmus made the rhetorical union of *eloquentia* and *sapientia* as normative an end of literary study as Sidney's criteria of evaluation.¹⁸⁸ The vagueness of this Christian humanism has often been criticized, but the difficulty in defining wisdom can be a virtue if this term is understood as subsuming within it the wide variety of ways in which literature can teach, move, or delight. Certainly, as Thomas Merton writes, wisdom is the traditional term for expressing the human need for "an overall perspective" which can "liberate us from the immediate" and give a sense of priority and ultimate significance to our existence. Yet far from "taking us altogether outside the 'real world,'" wisdom "deepens our communion with the concrete" and is absolutely vital in the concrete worlds of both literature and life.¹⁸⁹ A form of the word *sapientia* is used by Shakespeare only once, but the moment at which he does use it beautifully illustrates Coleridge's remark that Shakespeare has the power of "introducing the profoundest sentiments of wisdom, where they would be the least expected, yet where they are most truly natural."¹⁹⁰ When the storm is over and Lear charitably invites the wise Fool to shelter by saying, "Thou, sapient sir, sit here" (3.6.22), Shakespeare subtly enacts both the pain of the human struggle for wisdom and the capacity of literature to represent its achievement. The most, not the least, that literary critics can do is to also sit in the paths of wisdom that our most profound writers have made restful places from which to wisely contemplate the stormy world.

As politically focused critics will rightly protest, however, contemplation is, again, not precise enough a term to include the wide forms of wisdom that literature can convey, and to continue the application of Lonergan's method to criticism there might also arise the need for critical clarification of wisdom analogous to systematics. As the final step in this sustained method, the attempt to convey the interpretive meanings and foundational values learned from a work would become the basis for educational programs that are analogous to Lonergan's communications. Current cynicism among literary critics about the possibility of objective truth and value makes attempts at systematic wisdom rare, but the inevitable need either for wisdom or for an arbitrary imposition of will to guide literary education may cause the public to demand that critics provide foundations for the programs they offer students; to some extent, this is already

happening in the debates over political correctness.

Summary of Lonergan's Significance to Literary Criticism

A few of the most significant aspects of Lonergan's potential contribution to literary criticism may briefly be restated. Against the myth of Enlightenment objectivism and moral neutrality, Lonergan affirms that humans must ask not only whether something is true, but also whether it is good; that is, they must seek not only knowledge, but also wisdom. Of course, to even distinguish and desire these goals, value-judgements must guide the inquirer. Yet, against Nietzschean skepticism, it does not then become true that "value creates value," for the fact / value distinction must be maintained so that the values appropriate to each sphere are distinguished. Lonergan's epistemology does this by engaging the inquirer in a process in which, by asking appropriate questions, one can hope to be led toward a knowledge of both intellectual truth and ethical goodness. The basis of this process is not a technique, but rather an acceptance, which may be empirically tested, of the exigencies of the human mind and heart. As such, the Lonerganian approach to truth and goodness can be applied to any field, including literary criticism, in which one seeks to understand the truth and value of one's subject; it can also be applied by inquirers of many different metaphysical commitments. At the same time, since Lonergan's own metaphysic is theist rather than atheist, and since this metaphysic acknowledges that human sin is commonplace, Lonergan believes that the active work of Divinity in leading an inquirer towards truth and goodness must be gratefully acknowledged. Inquirers will accept the requirement of religious conversion in varying degrees. By openly acknowledging his own metaphysical foundations and encouraging others to do the same, Lonergan enhances (rather than detracts from) the possibility of a dialogue between persons of differing faiths resulting in a consensus about truth and value. Also contributing greatly to this possibility is Lonergan's eight-part method, which usefully distinguishes the role played by each of the four transcendental precepts in leading one toward truth and value, and thus allows researchers in diverse fields to aid each other in the common goal of a knowledge of truth and value.

Having stated what Lonergan can offer to literary criticism, it may also be helpful to clarify what he should not be asked to do. First, he offers little insight into the specific ways in which literature mediates meaning, though his eight-fold method does usefully distinguish the level of inquiry under which research into meaning should take place, and how a knowledge of meaning

may then contribute to the task of evaluation. Second, in general, Lonergan's philosophy should not become a source of themes that interpreters find in literature, as one often today sees, for example, in the work of critics influenced by Derrida or Foucault. This would only be appropriate, from Lonergan's point of view, if the literary work being studied actually did include Lonerganian concepts as an important part of its mediation of meaning; it is of course possible for literature to give a *mimesis* of philosophy, such as in the case of Renaissance neoplatonism. Normally, however, Lonergan's method will simply, but significantly, provide literary interpreters with an understanding of what a knowledge of truth and value is, and then a method by which they might systematically pursue the goal of writing literary criticism that truly presents a knowledge of the meaning and value of a particular literary work.

Conclusion: Shakespeare on Value

A complex test case of the power of Lonergan's method to provide these foundations for literary criticism is provided by Shakespeare studies. Before making this effort it is comforting to note, after the complexities of the philosophical understanding of the meaning of the term "value," that Lonergan's approach to value finds strong support in a passage from Troilus and Cressida that is Shakespeare's most detailed consideration of the concept of value. It is unsurprising that Eagleton, Taylor, and Smith entirely neglect this passage, however, for when Troilus asks the question which all three consider rhetorical, "What's aught but as 'tis valued?," Hector warns Troilus against marrying Cressida, and responds to the notion that "value is a transitive term" or that "value creates value" by saying:

But value dwells not in particular will,
It holds his estimate and dignity
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
As in the prizer. (2.2.54-56)

Here Shakespeare makes Lonergan's most important point on value, the notion that value does have an objective existence in that which is truly valuable, apart from any one person's ability to perceive it. Yet Shakespeare does not stop with this point, as do those who would banish an explicit discussion of value from criticism by appealing solely and vaguely to the intrinsic quality of literature. Instead, Hector continues

Tis mad idolatry

To make the service greater than the god,
 And the will dotes that is attributive
 To what infectiously itself affects,
 Without some image of th' affected merit. (2.2.56-61)

It has been argued that the opening line here alludes to Matthew 23: 19, "whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift,"¹⁹¹ but applied to criticism Hector's words might also be taken as a warning against mad bardolatry, which values Shakespeare without knowing the value of the precious gifts that are the plays themselves. Certainly the wisdom of the last three lines, wisdom that Troilus tragically fails to understand, reminds us that in order to know true value one's will must be altered from its tendency to attribute good to what initially gives satisfaction, and instead become directed towards gaining an authentic image of what truly deserves merit. In all human affairs, it is true that *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*, and hence being 'in love' with Shakespeare is merely an initial conversion that must be completed by intellectual conversion to the nature and beauty of Shakespeare's mediation of meaning, and moral or perhaps even religious conversion to the good that meaning might have for human beings. Since such conversion cannot take place in isolation, the individual critic who seeks authenticity must first expand his or her horizon by exploring the rich tradition of Shakespearean criticism.

Ch. 1 Endnotes

- ¹ Wiseman 86.
- ² Wilde 418.
- ³ Smith, Contingencies 17.
- ⁴ Coleridge, Lectures 225.
- ⁵ For example, see Charney, "Bad".
- ⁶ Taylor, Reinventing 395.
- ⁷ Frye, Anatomy 3-29.
- ⁸ Frye, "Value-judgements" 69.
- ⁹ Denham 138.
- ¹⁰ Frye, "Value-judgements" 66.
- ¹¹ Copleston 185.
- ¹² Denham 148.
- ¹³ See Hirsch, Aims 96; See Graff.
- ¹⁴ Arnold 594.
- ¹⁵ Nietzsche, Will 300.
- ¹⁶ Nietzsche, Will 301.
- ¹⁷ Nietzsche, Will 301.
- ¹⁸ Kant, Metaphysics 38.
- ¹⁹ Kant, Practical 229-230.
- ²⁰ Nietzsche, Will 78, 181.
- ²¹ Nietzsche, Genealogy 39, 17-58.
- ²² MacIntyre 113-14.
- ²³ Nietzsche, Genealogy 207. This was Nietzsche's planned subtitle for The Will to Power.
- ²⁴ Nietzsche, Will 556.
- ²⁵ See Vecser.
- ²⁶ See Meynell, Introduction 169-84.
- ²⁷ Nietzsche, Human 16.
- ²⁸ Kolodny 6.
- ²⁹ Kolodny 21.
- ³⁰ Kolodny 9.
- ³¹ Eagleton 11.
- ³² Kolodny 7.
- ³³ Eagleton 11.
- ³⁴ Eagleton 11-12.
- ³⁵ Smith 53.
- ³⁶ Smith 10.
- ³⁷ Smith 11.
- ³⁸ Smith 9.
- ³⁹ Smith 8.
- ⁴⁰ Kolodny 10.
- ⁴¹ Kolodny 9-10.
- ⁴² Smith 11.
- ⁴³ Taylor, Reinventing 6.
- ⁴⁴ Taylor, Reinventing 6.
- ⁴⁵ Taylor, Reinventing 6.
- ⁴⁶ Taylor, Reinventing 411.
- ⁴⁷ Hirsch, Aims 2.
- ⁴⁸ Hirsch, Aims 154.
- ⁴⁹ Hirsch, Aims 121.
- ⁵⁰ OED 1550.

- ⁶¹ Lonergan, Insight Preface.
- ⁶² Lonergan, Method 4.
- ⁶³ Lonergan, Method 9.
- ⁶⁴ Meynell, Introduction 19.
- ⁶⁵ Lonergan, Method 34.
- ⁶⁶ Lonergan, Method 231.
- ⁶⁷ Lonergan, Method 251-53.
- ⁶⁸ Lonergan, Method 265.
- ⁶⁹ Lonergan, Method 19-20.
- ⁷⁰ Lonergan, Insight 731.
- ⁷¹ Lonergan, Method 35.
- ⁷² Crowe 59.
- ⁷³ Streeter 327.
- ⁷⁴ Lonergan lists the basic operations as "seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshalling and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing" (Method 6).
- ⁷⁵ Lonergan, Method 9.
- ⁷⁶ Lonergan, Insight 332.
- ⁷⁷ Lonergan, Insight 332.
- ⁷⁸ Lonergan, Method 21.
- ⁷⁹ Meynell, "On Knowledge".
- ⁸⁰ Lonergan, "Cognitional" 210.
- ⁸¹ See Nietzsche, Will 273.
- ⁸² Streeter 327.
- ⁸³ Lonergan, Insight 19-25.
- ⁸⁴ Lonergan, Method 28.
- ⁸⁵ Lonergan, Method 28.
- ⁸⁶ See Lonergan, Method 263-65.
- ⁸⁷ See Popper.
- ⁸⁸ Lonergan, Insight 315.
- ⁸⁹ Lonergan, Insight 286-87.
- ⁹⁰ Lonergan, Insight 315.
- ⁹¹ Lonergan, Insight 299.
- ⁹² Lonergan, Insight 340.
- ⁹³ Lonergan, Insight 341.
- ⁹⁴ Lonergan, Method 28.
- ⁹⁵ Lonergan, Method 238.
- ⁹⁶ Lonergan, Method 263.
- ⁹⁷ Lonergan, Method 263.
- ⁹⁸ Lonergan, Method 292.
- ⁹⁹ Lonergan, Method 215.
- ¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, Method 219.
- ¹⁰¹ Lonergan, Method 224.
- ¹⁰² Lonergan, Method 31.
- ¹⁰³ Kidder offers an interesting example of how Lonerganian feminists apply this notion to the patriarchal bias of Catholicism.
- ¹⁰⁴ Streeter 315.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lonergan, Method 238.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lonergan, Method 104.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lonergan, Method 104.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lonergan, Method 38-39.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lonergan, Method 27.

- ¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, Method 34.
- ¹⁰¹ Lonergan, Method 37.
- ¹⁰² Lonergan, Method 37.
- ¹⁰³ Lonergan, Method 38.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lonergan, Method 37.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lonergan, Method 38.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lonergan, Method 35.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lonergan, Method 52.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lonergan, Method 40.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lonergan, Method 117-18.
- ¹¹⁰ Lonergan, Method 38-39.
- ¹¹¹ Lonergan, Method 19.
- ¹¹² Aquinas 433.
- ¹¹³ Lonergan, Method 242.
- ¹¹⁴ Lonergan, Method 242.
- ¹¹⁵ Lonergan, Method 265.
- ¹¹⁶ Lonergan, Method 18.
- ¹¹⁷ Lonergan, Method 18.
- ¹¹⁸ Lonergan, Method 35.
- ¹¹⁹ Lonergan, Method 121.
- ¹²⁰ Augustine, On Christian 75.
- ¹²¹ Lonergan, Method 278.
- ¹²² Lonergan, Method 242.
- ¹²³ Augustine, On Christian 54.
- ¹²⁴ Lonergan, Method 117-118.
- ¹²⁵ Lonergan, Method 55.
- ¹²⁶ Lonergan, Method 242.
- ¹²⁷ Lonergan, Method 117.
- ¹²⁸ Lonergan, Method 118.
- ¹²⁹ Lonergan, Method 242.
- ¹³⁰ Lonergan, Method 268.
- ¹³¹ Lonergan, Method 270.
- ¹³² Hirsch, Aims 154.
- ¹³³ Hirsch, Aims 121.
- ¹³⁴ Hirsch, Aims 121-22.
- ¹³⁵ As Hirsch also argues, Aims 158.
- ¹³⁶ Frye, Anatomy 7.
- ¹³⁷ Lonergan, Method 161.
- ¹³⁸ Lonergan, Method 161.
- ¹³⁹ Lonergan, Method 4.
- ¹⁴⁰ Lonergan, Method 134.
- ¹⁴¹ Lonergan, Method 268.
- ¹⁴² Lonergan, Method 135.
- ¹⁴³ Lonergan, Method 134.
- ¹⁴⁴ Lonergan, Method 141.
- ¹⁴⁵ Morelli 460.
- ¹⁴⁶ Hirsch, "What Isn't" 25.
- ¹⁴⁷ Hirsch, "What Isn't" 25.
- ¹⁴⁸ Hirsch, "What Isn't" 26.
- ¹⁴⁹ Hirsch, "What Isn't" 34.
- ¹⁵⁰ Eagleton 205.
- ¹⁵¹ Wellek 17.

- ¹⁰² Barthes, Writing.
- ¹⁰³ Angeles 63.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lonergan, Method 219.
- ¹⁰⁵ Plato, Republic X.
- ¹⁰⁶ Baldick 137.
- ¹⁰⁷ Else 74-88.
- ¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, Poetics 696.
- ¹⁰⁹ Horace 73.
- ¹⁰⁰ Sidney, Apology 158.
- ¹⁰¹ Lonergan, Method 154.
- ¹⁰² Lonergan, Method 155.
- ¹⁰³ Lonergan, Method 157.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lonergan, Method 154.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lonergan, Method 154.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lonergan, Method 56.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lonergan, Method 159-160.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lonergan, Method 160.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lonergan, Method.
- ¹⁷⁰ Foucault, "What is" 103.
- ¹⁷¹ See Wimsatt.
- ¹⁷² Lonergan, Method 163.
- ¹⁷³ Lonergan, Method 163.
- ¹⁷⁴ Lonergan, Method 215.
- ¹⁷⁵ Schlegel, qtd. Lonergan, Method 161.
- ¹⁷⁶ Lonergan, Method 163.
- ¹⁷⁷ Hirsch, Aims 106.
- ¹⁷⁸ Lonergan, Method 166.
- ¹⁷⁹ Lonergan, Method 162.
- ¹⁸⁰ Lonergan, Method 161.
- ¹⁸¹ Lonergan, Method 235.
- ¹⁸² Lonergan, Method 253.
- ¹⁸³ Lonergan, Method 268.
- ¹⁸⁴ Sidney, Apology 158.
- ¹⁸⁵ Hirsch, Aims 157.
- ¹⁸⁶ Lonergan, Method 253.
- ¹⁸⁷ Lonergan, Topics 37-38.
- ¹⁸⁸ Erasmus, Copia 1-5; see Joanna Martindale 157-210.
- ¹⁸⁹ Merton, Baptism 100.
- ¹⁹⁰ Coleridge, Lectures 133.
- ¹⁹¹ Noble, Biblical 214.

**“To Rehearse the Method of My Pen”:
Lonerganian Method in Shakespeare Studies**

Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity.

Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology¹

A Dwarf standing on the shoulders of a Giant may see farther than a Giant himself.

Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy²

Think not...that therefore I have forg'd, or am not able /
Verbatim to rehearse the method of my pen.

Gloucester, 1 Henry VI (3.1.10-13)

Introduction: The Possibility and Promise of Method in Shakespeare studies

Of all the fields of literary criticism to which a Lonerganian method might be applied, none is potentially more fruitful, nor immediately more daunting, than Shakespeare studies. Its long history has created rich critical traditions corresponding to all of the Lonerganian functional specialties, yet today this very wealth seems unmanageable and ‘new’ research is often greeted with cynicism. Indeed the very pace of critical production--in 1986 alone the World Shakespeare Bibliography contained 4,069 items--seems to require hermeneutic skepticism since clearly no single person can read all of the work produced, and even scholars seem to be left with the choice either to “ignore it or criticize and revise it.”³ “Either strategy,” Gary Taylor argues, “ensures the transience of previous interpretations.”⁴ Although this conclusion might overstate the case, Taylor poses a difficult epistemological problem when he compares knowledge production in Shakespeare studies to that of the natural sciences, in which

knowledge expands at an accelerating velocity; but the physical universe still dwarfs the scratchings of the insects exploring its surface. In Shakespeare’s case, by contrast, the rising inverted pyramid of interpretation balances precariously upon a single point: a collection of works, written over the course of only twenty-five years, easily contained within the boundaries of one book. Can so small a datum really support so many interpretations, critical and theatrical?⁵

The answer, Taylor insists, is that “it does not,” and that it is a need for novelty in the market-driven “interpretation industries” of the academy and theatre which causes critics or directors to

ignore the "author's original intention" and thus "undermine consumer demand for authenticity."⁶

Apart from expressing surprise at a postmodernist invoking authorial intention and audience authenticity, a Lonerganian will also argue that Taylor's account is descriptive of the current state of literary criticism but is not normative, and will offer the hermeneutic strategies of critical realism in an effort to achieve judgments of meaning and of value. Yet whether such judgements can be arrived at is an uncertain matter, and one whose difficulties are enhanced not only by the complexities of Shakespearean texts and the amount of Shakespearean criticism, but also by cardinal features of Lonergan's method itself.

Working in a field even more developed than Shakespeare studies, theology, causes Lonergan to note that no scholar can be expert in all the functional specialties, and thus "a serious contribution to one of the eight is as much as can be demanded of a single piece of work."⁷

However, Lonergan also emphasizes that the specialties are interdependent,⁸ that "none can stand without the other seven."⁹ If both these statements are true, one wonders whether any one person's literary scholarship can have the progressive and cumulative character essential to Lonerganian method, since "results are progressive only if there is a sustained succession of discoveries" and "cumulative only if there is effected a synthesis of each new insight with all previous, valid insights."¹⁰ Even if greater team work were possible within the humanities (and it certainly is), there still arises the difficult question of how evaluative critics working on dialectic and foundations can build on the voluminous work done in research, interpretation, and history; at the same time, as has already been argued, failing to do so leads to inaccurate evaluation.

What appear to be theoretical deficiencies in Lonergan's method, though, are present precisely to reflect the tensions caused by practical difficulties inherent in scholarship which strives for critical realism rather than simply the reproduction of one's own biases. Further theoretical clarifications, however, make it possible to work practically within these tensions and avoid the "one-sided totalitarian ambitions" of critics from a particular field that could result if field specialization did not allow one "to distinguish different tasks and to prevent them from being confused."¹¹ Central to understanding how the specialties work together is Lonergan's clarification of the way each transcendental level achieves interdependence, which in Lonergan's method means "reciprocal dependence."¹² Thus, in the mediating phase,

Not only does interpretation depend upon research but also research depends upon

interpretation. Not only does history depend upon both research and interpretation, but no less history supplies the context and perspectives within which research and interpretation operate. Not only does dialectic depend on history, interpretation, and research, but inversely in so far as dialectic is transcendently grounded it is able, as we shall see, to provide interpretation and history with heuristic structures, much as mathematics provides the natural sciences with such structures.¹³

Lonergan notes that while scholarly demands may make “teamwork” desirable,¹⁴ a “dynamic unity” can be achieved within the mind of a single scholar. A scholar may bring all four of the transcendental levels to each specialty, and within each thus experiences the “interdependence of experience, understanding, judgement, and decision.”¹⁵ Further, just as one transcendental level can be distinguished and emphasized according to the nature of the question asked, so too can a distinct functional specialty be emphasized. This emphasis, in turn, allows one to understand what constitutes a “serious contribution” to any individual specialty. Primarily, this means to “produce the type of evidence proper to the specialty”; secondarily, especially while transcendental method is not “generally recognized” by many practicing scholars, a serious contribution means to “preclude misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation” by drawing “attention to the fact of specialization” even while also giving “some indication” of one’s “awareness of what is to be added to his statements in the light of the evidence available to other, distinct specialties.”¹⁶

How might a Shakespearean evaluative critic use the reciprocal dependence of the specialties to make a “serious contribution” to Shakespeare studies? First of all, it is essential to accept Lonergan’s argument that when dialectic is “transcendently grounded,” it provides “heuristic structures” for history and interpretation. Thus, while a Lonerganian critic recognizes the need to be enlightened by others, the foundations of critical realism require the transcendental questions to be asked; this is the very precondition for allowing other’s opposing views to enter the debate. To become aware of the research, interpretative, or historical positions of others, one must at least first ask: what is the text being used? what, or how, might the text mean? what historical judgements form the context for this interpretation? Within each of these first three specialties innumerable other questions are asked that add enormous complexity. Nevertheless, an evaluative critic can isolate key questions that are appropriate to their functional specialty, questions which are asked by a wide range of scholars whose fundamental values widely differ; and, some brief

suggestion of at least the source of the answers can be suggested. Recalling that contexts can be isolated as "a nest of interlocked or interwoven questions and answers,"¹⁷ at least a range of interpretative possibility can be developed and brought to the debate. At the descriptive stage of dialectic, the fundamentally differing approaches to the transcendental question of value--why is this good?--can first be outlined and clarified. Second, at the normative stage of dialectic, these evaluations can themselves be evaluated, both according to whether they authentically build on valid interpretations, and according to the validity of their broadest intellectual, moral, and religious horizons. Third, and finally, a statement of foundational wisdom can be tentatively offered.

In order for a critic to employ this method and evaluate any Shakespearean play, however, more is required than an empty head and an eight part set of rules to be followed meticulously. An authentic response to the traditions of Shakespearean criticism first requires, despite its inevitable perspectivism, a broad historical survey. Yet this survey of Shakespearean interpretative and evaluative criticism must not simply be chronological, for to apply this massive field it must be organized into Lonergan's functional specialties. In turn, these specialties must themselves be adapted in order to ask questions of intelligence and value of the unique form of literature that is Shakespearean drama.

It is clear that Shakespearean critics practice the specialty of research in order to establish the parameters for the textual possibilities objectively available for Shakespearean interpreters. In the specialty of Shakespearean interpretation, the genre of drama necessitates a distinction between extratextual and intratextual realms of meaning. Extratextual meaning explores our knowledge of the historical author and audience of Shakespearean drama, knowledge which many critics have shown to be vital to interpretation. Due to the mimetic nature of literature, here the functional specialty of history overlaps with interpretation, and extratextual meaning raises the fundamental question of the capacity of the linguistic sign to signify. Intratextual meaning is even more complex, but Aristotle's classification of the central intratextual features of drama (plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and song) remains useful. Despite some alterations of terms in other critical schools, Aristotle's central categories have all proven invaluable to criticism's attempt to describe Shakespeare's mediation of meaning. Yet because all of these categories are themselves purposive and hence value-laden, each internal feature also raises the question, "why might one value this mediation of meaning?". For practical purposes, it is best to ask the evaluative questions

as they are raised by a particular internal mediation of meaning. The sum value of each play is greater than its internal parts, however, and the more explicitly evaluative questions—which engage the broadest horizons and values of the critic—can also be isolated and grouped in a descriptive dialectic which aims to suggest the multiple ways in which Shakespearean plays might be valuable. This survey will not continue to the stage of normative dialectic, however, for evaluations of Shakespearean drama must be judged first on whether they build on valid interpretations of the play in question, and only then on the value that these interpretations have to offer to our broadest intellectual, moral and religious horizons.

This rehearsal of method, then, will provide the heuristic background that will be used as “a framework for collaborative creativity”¹⁸ to explore the meaning and value of each individual romance. Every question outlined in this chapter will not be asked of the ensuing romances, for in Shakespeare studies “the play’s the thing” (*Ham.* 2.2.604), and the nature of each individual play must determine the resources that are most important to its interpretation. As well, in the ensuing chapters on each romance, often it will be critics other than those primarily responsible for the influence of a critical question who will apply these questions to each romance. Nevertheless, the following survey will suggest a response to the fundamental problem of “how a contemporary critic could take advantage of [past] work to avoid the prejudices of our own epoch.”¹⁹

Shakespearean Harriet Hawkins acknowledges this difficulty when, after first affirming with Taylor that most criticism can be categorized “according to the critical and ideological paradigms” of its time, she nevertheless holds out hope that the exploration of opposing positions might provide the means by which to test the validity of our own interpretations and evaluations:

It is, however, not so easy to see to what degree one’s own interpretations and reactions to the plays are, likewise, historically determined by critical and ideological vogues. For the fact is that, so long as we disregard any evidence against our own partial view of Shakespeare’s scripts ... nothing is easier than to reinterpret them in terms of whatever ideology we personally, or professionally or politically or theologically, find especially congenial.²⁰

If Lonergan’s functional specialties are used to organize Shakespeare studies, and if critics ask each of the four transcendental questions within each specialty while also emphasizing the questions most appropriate to that specialty, then there may be a systematic means by which

Shakespeareans can move towards an objective knowledge of the meaning and value of Shakespearean drama.

Research: Shakespearean Textual Scholarship

The basic question for research is, "What are the texts available for interpretations?". For Shakespeareans, there seems, at first, to be a simple answer to this question, since there are extant copies of the quarto and folio editions of Shakespeare's works published during or just after his lifetime. However, when other questions are asked--how accurately do the available texts reflect the intention of the author? how did printing practice transmit the available texts? how does one decide between copies whose texts differ?--a number of historical factors might make the Shakespearean research question seem so indeterminate that the basis for objective interpretation is undercut. The most recent scholarly attempt to answer the Shakespearean research question, Wells' and Taylor's "textual companion" to their Oxford Shakespeare, opens by cautioning that, "since we do not *know* what Shakespeare wrote, someone has to *decide* what Shakespeare wrote, on the basis of the evidence available at a particular time."²¹ Since this evidence is so variable, "no edition of Shakespeare can or should be definitive," and of the "possible and desirable undefinitive editions, one asks only that they define their own limitations: that they be self-conscious, coherent, and explicit about the ways in which they mediate between writer and reader."²²

A Lonerganian response to this position immediately notes that, like interpretation, research is "just a particular case of knowing,"²³ in this case knowing what the text is, and sees in Wells' and Taylor's rush towards indeterminacy another case of "confusion about knowing" causing confusion. Though the evidence clearly requires one to give up the notion of an "unmediated" text coming directly from Shakespeare's pen, limiting knowledge to one's ability to "take a look" at such a text evidences a naive realist approach to knowledge. Surely a desirable text requires more than editors simply expressing the reasons for their choices, for there are a limited number of textual options, and some reasons will be judged to bring us more accurately into the context of possible textual options than others. Beginning with Theobald's rejection of Pope's view that moral preference is as valid a reason for editorial choice as is the evidence of historical manuscripts, the principles of historical scholarship applied (most notably) by Greg, Bowers, and Hinman have produced much evidence about Renaissance textual practice.²⁴ Wells and Taylor, despite their humble, skeptical disclaimers, move us closer to critical realism about Shakespeare's

text both by undercutting false notions of objectivity, and by maintaining our awareness of the wide range of textual options that are available. This range of options needs to be consulted only when an interpretative crux arises, however, and so this dissertation cites, except where otherwise indicated, from one current, scholarly edition, the Riverside Shakespeare. Other editors of the romances are also consulted frequently, but the Riverside's combination of rich scholarship and at least partial Renaissance spelling makes it a text especially well suited to the aims of Lonergan's method.

Extratextual Interpretation and History: Shakespeare and his Audience

Understanding the value of consulting a variety of historically significant Shakespearean texts is the first fruit of Lonerganian method, but a far more complex task is interpreting the meanings which they might mediate. Just as the existence of an historically contextualized author is essential to selecting the texts of research, becoming aware of the meaning possibly intended by an historical author is the most practical place to begin interpretation. However, because of the manifold yet misty character of Renaissance historical evidence, the question "who was Shakespeare, and how did his artistic choices and historical circumstances affect the meaning of his works?" is an extraordinarily complex, difficult problem for which two extreme, untenable answers have dominated Shakespearean criticism. Biographical criticism makes the author's character the basis of evaluation, such as in Dryden's comment that "of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets," Shakespeare "had the widest and most comprehensive soul."²⁵ Influenced by psychology, some modern biographical critics hold that the meaning of a text is found by seeing it as the projection of an author's psyche.²⁶ To such work one may only say that its object, knowledge of the author, is different from the object pursued here, which is the meaning of Shakespeare's works.

To say more may lead to another extreme, the skeptical view that discussion of the author is either impossible or irrelevant. Because Shakespeare was a popular dramatist at a time when drama was thought historically insignificant (cf. Son. 111), the resultant scarcity of documented facts about his life has led many to believe that we know next to nothing about Shakespeare. Even if we did, Enlightenment critics often thought of Shakespeare as being outside his creation, like a deistic god. Twentieth-century critics of this view naturally see in Shakespearean biographical criticism the "intentional fallacy" of attributing the meaning of a work to an author's intentions,

while Nietzschean Shakespeareans embrace the “death of the author” as being, like the “death of God,” a “liberation of the text from the authority of a presence behind it which gives it meaning.”²⁷ The prodigious work of Samuel Schoenbaum has done much to advance our knowledge of Shakespeare’s life, while Geoffrey Bullough’s compilation of Shakespeare’s sources has allowed scholars to ask a question--“how did Shakespeare adapt and therefore alter the meaning of his sources?”--which is dependent upon the concept of authorial intention. As Richard Levin points out, the death of the author “creates a hermeneutic vacuum”²⁸ and, absurdly, in post-modern criticism often “the text acquires human emotions as well as purposes.”²⁹ Purposeful authorial intention and development also provide the basis for claiming probable intertextual meaning between works by the same author, and progressive advances in the chronological dating of Shakespeare’s plays have made this a commonplace feature of twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism.

Less specifically, but no less importantly, the situating of the author in historical space and time--in the case of Shakespeare, England 1564-1616--allows one to postulate other probable intertextual meanings, and to reject those which are anachronistic. Often such meanings are suggested by the author’s education, and there are numerous suggestions in Shakespeare’s plays (cf. LLL 4.2., Wiv. 4.1.) that he attended an Elizabethan grammar school, whose Christian humanist curriculum taught the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric (and to a much lesser extent the quadrivium of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy) through the imitation of classical Latin texts and the Bible.³⁰ Bullough shows definitively that many of these texts, along with works like Holinshed’s Chronicles and North’s translation of Plutarch’s Lives of the Greeks and Romans, are certainly sources for Shakespeare’s plays, yet whether it is the Latin version of writers such as Terence, Caesar, Ovid and Virgil, or Renaissance English translations such as Golding’s Metamorphoses, is often unclear.³¹ Further, though certainly Shakespeare drew on the common fund of Classical mythology, does he baptize the pagan gods in the manner of Renaissance Christian neoplatonist or humanist poets such as Spenser or Milton? If so, does this neoplatonism draw on the heretical Florentine tradition of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico, or upon the orthodox neoplatonism of Augustine that influences the Renaissance through a wide variety of writers?³² Similarly, there is no question that Shakespeare was familiar both with the Bible itself (primarily the Geneva English translation), and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

However, the clarity of religious reference is often uncertain, first because censorship limited explicit religious language in the theatre,³³ and, second, because paraphrase was a common literary technique that “Shakespeare was fond of.”³⁴ To cite just one example, anyone who has tried to unravel the range of Catholic and Protestant references in Hamlet alone knows how varied is Shakespeare’s use of Renaissance Christian theology.³⁵ Without question, for primary influences such as Ovid³⁶ or the Bible,³⁷ specialized studies must be consulted, especially to see how these influences were mediated by commentaries or other works of art.³⁸ A key example of the latter is medieval drama, whose mystery cycles Shakespeare may have seen as a youth in the 1570s,³⁹ and whose content and form have been shown by many critics to be an important influence.⁴⁰ Not only past works, but also Shakespeare’s contemporaries have proven to be important sources of intertextual allusion and imitative artistic practice, especially major figures such as Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, Kyd, Jonson, and Fletcher, the younger dramatist with whom Shakespeare probably collaborated at the end of his career.⁴¹

These works might be described as influences upon the author, but perhaps more importantly for the meaning of the plays they are sources of conventions that appeal to a particular historical audience. Understanding the audience thus also becomes crucial for an interpretation of Shakespearean drama, as Muriel Bradbrook suggests in defining convention as

an agreement between writers and readers, whereby the artist is allowed to limit and simplify his material in order to secure greater concentration through a control of the distribution of emphasis.⁴²

As a popular dramatist who regularly used prologues, epilogues, soliloquies and metadramatic comments, Shakespeare naturally became aware of the importance of audience response in the creation of dramatic meaning, yet he also could have been influenced (either directly or secondarily) by Aristotle’s Rhetoric, which argues that of the three elements in any speech communication--speaker, speech, and audience--it is the latter “which determines the speech’s end and object.”⁴³ Further, Shakespeare might have learned, perhaps from Sidney’s Defense of Poesy, Aristotle’s theory of *catharsis*, which held that the creation of pity and fear in the audience is vital to the meaning of tragedy.⁴⁴ In comedy as well, Shakespeare recognizes the importance of audience, as Rosalind of Love’s Labour’s Lost suggests by saying, “A jest’s prosperity lies in the

ear / Of him that hears it, never in the tongue / Of him that makes it" (5.2.847-49). However, even with information from the history of performance, audience response is difficult to analyze. In the history of Shakespeare criticism, analysis of the audience has produced vastly differing evaluations, with some arguing that because of "the meaner sort of people,"⁴⁵ Shakespeare "acquired a habit" of "making concessions to the most vulgar stratum of his audience."⁴⁶ By contrast, others argue that the social diversity of Shakespeare's audience accounts for popular conventions which appeal to common humanity,⁴⁷ although it has also been claimed that Shakespeare's audience was mainly upper class.⁴⁸ Although this question remains unclear, historical scholarship on the nature of Shakespeare's theatre has given us a much better idea of the conditions in which Shakespeare and his actors worked and his audience watched the plays,⁴⁹ and today has even allowed scholars to reconstruct an actual similitude of "the great globe" (*Tmp.* 4.1.153) itself.⁵⁰ Whatever the makeup of his historical audience, Shakespeare's central if commonplace dramatic trope, "all the world's a stage" (*AYL* 2.7.139), has in the succeeding centuries taken on the literal meaning predicted in *Julius Caesar* by Casca (3.1.111-113). Although it is true that Jonson's original praise of Shakespeare as "not of an age, but for all time"⁵¹ must not allow us to forget what we can learn from the Renaissance audience, perhaps the more important question is why his plays remain valuable in such a wide variety of human cultures.

Extratextual Interpretation: The Historical Reference of Shakespearean Signs

All of the extratextual references so far discussed require historical judgements, but most of them have been discussed by literary scholars who could be working solely within the formalist view that literature is created out of other literature. This order may seem appropriate for poetics, but according to Lonergan "understanding the text" also requires that one "understands the object to which the text refers."⁵² If Shakespeare, like many poets who practice a wide range of *mimesis*, refers to life as well as to literature, then understanding his works requires knowledge not only of books but also of history. Accepting this view thus requires one to reject the view of the linguistic sign held by one recent Shakespearean critical school, deconstruction. According to one of its practitioners, "because of its tropes, its metaphors, its images, language cannot be reduced to a series of unified, graspable, 'readable' and authorially validated meanings"; texts are "endlessly in free play," and refer "to other texts, other uses of language, rather than to a limited range of

referents imposed from outside themselves.”⁵³ It is true that figurative language can create polysemous meanings unrelated to historical reality (such as through metaphor or personification). However, it is also instructive that an eminent scholar of Renaissance rhetoric, Brian Vickers, lambastes deconstructionists for failing to acknowledge the ability of language to refer historically.⁵⁴ Vickers concludes that

Texts are actually built out of referents, utterances that discriminate one character from another, one motive from another, one social group, institution, or landscape from another. If language could not perform these functions, life, let alone literature, would be impossible.⁵⁵

Vickers does not, in my view, overstate his case; many examples from medical, legal, or military cases could be cited in which a case of mistaken reference, or the inability of language to refer altogether, would result in the loss of life. Conversely, some linguistic reference is certain, as when, to take a less serious example from Shakespeare, Fluellen makes clear to Pistol that he must bite the leek: “Yes, certainly, and out of doubt and out of question too, and ambiguities” (H5 5.1.45-46). Within Shakespeare studies, the practical proof of language’s ability to refer is the widespread reliance on heavily annotated editions whose footnotes often explicate historical ideas, objects, or events. A key question for Shakespeareans, then, must be philological: “how does one choose the possible range of meanings available to any word in Shakespeare’s text?”.

Practically, many critics and editors of Shakespeare simply rely upon works such as the Oxford English Dictionary or the lexicons of Schmidt or Onions, but it must be asked how these works choose their meanings, and how they might be debated. A fine theoretical answer to this question may be found in St. Augustine, who argues that figurative signs should be studied “partly with reference to a knowledge of languages and partly with reference to a knowledge of things,” precisely because “ignorance of things makes figurative expressions obscure.”⁵⁶ This view does not strive, as Hawkes and deconstructionists generally seem to believe, for “a single definitive interpretation.”⁵⁷ Rather, when the OED compares diction from different historical periods, or Schmidt or Onions list different uses of the same word within the Shakespearean canon, the first part of Augustine’s advice is being followed, and the range of meaning objectively available is being expanded. Scholars may continue this process by comparing other texts from Shakespeare’s linguistic context, such as historical documents or other literary works; helpful secondary works

here are concordances of other Renaissance writers, or specialized studies of particular aspects of Shakespeare's language, such as grammar,⁵⁸ his wordplay,⁵⁹ his bawdy,⁶⁰ his use of proverbs,⁶¹ or the etymological significance of his character's names.⁶²

Because historical reference is an essential aspect of Shakespearean linguistic meaning, perhaps New Historicism, the critical school that grew up in reaction to deconstruction, might be valuable. Unfortunately, the primary influence on this school is Foucault, whose view of history as a set of impersonal codes or "discourses" cut off from a human author or audience portrays history as just another unknowable, radically ambiguous postmodern "text". Thus a Shakespearean New Historicist, Louis Montrose, sees in history a "multiplicity of unstable, variously conjoined and conflicting discourses" which differs from 'old' historicism in refusing "to posit and privilege a unified and autonomous individual--whether an Author or a Work--to be set against a social or literary background."⁶³ Because of the already noted Shakespearean meanings mediated by authorial intention and audience response, this approach to history seems particularly inappropriate for Shakespeare studies. It must also be asked whether New Historicism can stand as a valid theory of history at all, given that its mingling of history and literature as common "texts" fails to note, as Lonergan reminds us, that

The word, history, is employed in two senses. There is history (1) that is written about, and there is history (2) that is written. History (2) aims at expressing knowledge of history (1).⁶⁴

Lonergan accepts that History (2) will always entail some element of perspectivism, because of the complexity of history (1), but he would demand that literary criticism seek historical critical realism by asking the transcendental questions. A dialectical approach to historical knowledge in literature accepts that, so long as past insights are not forgotten, progressively enlarging contexts can provide a progressively stronger basis for judgement. For example, the largely everyday historical knowledge of Dover Wilson's Life in Shakespeare's England was augmented by the intellectual history of Tillyard's The Elizabethan World Picture, which in turn has been added to by New Historicists who compare Shakespeare's plays with nonliterary historical documents,⁶⁵ which in turn is augmented by specialists each covering many of Dover Wilson's topics but in much greater detail,⁶⁶ work that may yet be challenged through reference to other Renaissance historical or intellectual contexts.⁶⁷ All of this evidence, when relevant, can and should be compared by

Shakespeareans to the data of the plays themselves, in order to ask, "to what extent do historical languages, objects, events, or ideas provide referents for the words and actions of Shakespeare's plays?"

Extratextual and Intratextual Meaning: Genre

Besides arguing that poetry is capable of referring to history, of course, Aristotle's Poetics is better known for describing poetry as a productive art whose product, the *mimesis*, is objective of author and audience, and apart from how our knowledge of its meaning may be affected by these external elements. Within the objective text of the "product" known as drama, Aristotle further distinguishes six primary bearers of dramatic meaning: plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle. Aristotle, of course, wrote on tragic Greek drama rather than Shakespearean drama; and surely it is wrong, as Pope said, to judge "a man by the laws of one country, who acted under those of another."⁶⁸ While concepts such as the three unities have been misused in dramatic evaluation, as modes of interpretation the six Aristotelian categories have been widely and profitably employed in many different forms of Shakespearean criticism. Because Aristotle focuses upon tragedy, however, it is valuable to precede discussion of the six basic categories with a consideration of genre, a concept crucial to both interpretation and evaluation.

Aristotle opens the Poetics by promising to write on poetry, "not only the art in general but also of its species and their respective capacities." He then distinguishes kinds of poetry "either by a difference of kind in their means, or by differences in the objects, or in the manner of their imitations."⁶⁹ This suggests the concept of genre, the English word which derives from the Latin "genus," meaning "source" or "kind"; but, this concept is not explicitly theorized. Yet many of Aristotle's interpretative categories, such as the order of a plot or the *hamartia* of a hero, apply specifically to tragedy, as do evaluative concepts such as the *catharsis* of pity and fear, in which the audience feels "pity" for imagined human beings experiencing suffering, and "fear" that a similar fate could await them.⁷⁰ The focus of this dissertation, and of the ensuing discussion of genre, will be tragicomedy or romance, but first it is worth noticing that Aristotle's evaluative question here could be asked of any genre: "what effect upon the audience is achieved by the characteristic qualities of this genre?"

The influence of the Poetics upon the English Renaissance is indirect, but can clearly be seen in Sidney's Apology. Sidney censures plays which are "neither right tragedies, nor right

comedies, mingling kings and clowns,"⁷¹ and he outlines how each genre should affect its audience. Some neoclassical critics did devalue Shakespeare's plays for failing to meet these criteria but, while clearly aware of generic divisions, Shakespeare also followed Sidney's call to "grow in effect another nature."⁷² Shakespeare took a playful, creative attitude to the mingling of genres which, to borrow the words of Polonius, many have taken as proof that his players are

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited; (*Ham.* 2.2.396-400)

Shakespeare's "unlimited" plays helped to spur the Jacobean taste for the mixed genre of "tragicomedy,"⁷³ and eventually gained acceptance from great critics such as Dryden, who writes that "a scene of mirth, mixed with tragedy," has the same enlivening effect "as music has betwixt the acts," and seems to regard tragicomedy as the most valuable dramatic genre.⁷⁴ Johnson, similarly, argues that against the rules of art "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature,"⁷⁵ and sees Shakespeare's plays as "of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination."⁷⁶ Coleridge, as well, admires Shakespeare's ability to portray opposites but then produce unity, "the ultimate end of human thought and human feeling."⁷⁷ Such critics evaluate genre according to its power to represent (mimetically) human life, asking, "what do the characteristics of a genre reveal of the nature of human life?"

Victorian critic Edward Dowden answered this question by finding a "large serene wisdom" in Shakespeare's late plays, but also a "romantic" quality.⁷⁸ The term "romance" then becomes the most common twentieth-century term for these plays, despite the fact that responses to the meaning of this genre varied widely. Lytton Strachey reacted against Dowden by arguing that the last plays showed a Shakespeare "bored" with "everything except poetry and poetical dreams,"⁷⁹ but G.W. Knight saw even more spiritual value than did Dowden. In the romances, Knight finds "the progress from spiritual pain and despairing thought through stoic acceptance to a serene and mystic joy" that is "a universal rhythm of the spirit of man"; as such, the last plays are not "to be read as pleasant fancies: rather as parables of a profound and glorious truth."⁸⁰ The inevitable reaction against Knight was led by D. G. James, who skeptically argued that the

romances represented private myth rather than universal religion.⁸¹ John F. Danby, meanwhile, stressed that “Shakespeare’s last plays are not conceived at the same level of seriousness as Dante’s Paradiso,” but rather show a “comparatively relaxed” artist whose work is “adjusted to the level of entertainment.”⁸² By the late 1950s, Philip Edwards argued that “criticism might for the moment ignore the illumination and the universality” in the romances in order to “learn a critical language capable of interpreting them.”⁸³ This call was primarily answered by Northrop Frye, who emphasized literary structure by arguing that Shakespearean comedy and romance are “obviously conventionalized,” and seek their “own end instead of holding the mirror up to nature.”⁸⁴ For Frye, the romances also remind us that our “profoundest kind of literary experience, the kind that we return to after we have, so to speak, seen everything, may be very close to the experience of a child listening to a story, too spellbound to question the narrative logic.”⁸⁵ Here Frye recalls Sidney’s commendation of “a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner,” though Frye does not include Sidney’s added reason for valuing such tales: they “intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue.”⁸⁶ Shakespeare’s romances have also been linked to the old tales of Greek romance,⁸⁷ but probably the strongest response to Frye is made by Howard Felperin, who emphasizes the romances’ affinities with the ethical character of medieval literature. In contemporary criticism, there are numerous other approaches. Some feminists reject the romances as “patriarchy, pure and simple,”⁸⁸ while others stress these plays’ serious concern with gender and familial relationships, particularly that of father and daughter.⁸⁹ Still others find in the romances many topical references to King James I and his royal family,⁹⁰ while in the 1980s many New Historicist critics argue that the romances reflect Renaissance political discourse. To conclude this survey where it began, in the 1990s Peggy Simonds contrasts tragedy, which is “a reenactment of human sacrifice for the good of the community,” with Renaissance tragicomedy, which “dramatizes personal reform and a redeeming act of faith as a part of a spiritual initiation rite” that is analogous to the Christian gospel.⁹¹ As all of these approaches suggest, the critics’ attitude to genre is a crucial aspect of both their interpretation and evaluation of Shakespearean drama.

Intratextual Meaning: Genre and the Six Categories of Aristotle’s Poetics

The importance of genre suggests why discussion of plot ought never to be dismissed as

“plot summary” or mere description of events, for the order of the plot is the most basic way to distinguish genres; as Dante puts it, tragedy “in its beginning is admirable and quiet, in its ending or catastrophe foul and horrible,” while comedy begins “with some adverse circumstances, but its theme hath a happy termination.”⁹² Aristotle calls plot the most important of the six categories,⁹³ and stresses the priority of event over character by defining plot as “essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery.”⁹⁴ Behind the preeminence of plot, then, is an ethical rationale--“All human happiness or misery takes the form of action; the end for which we live is a certain kind of activity, not a quality”⁹⁵--which makes clear that events for Aristotle become meaningful within the context of an entire human life. Aristotle thus defines plot as “the end and purpose of the tragedy,” precisely because “the end is everywhere the chief thing.”⁹⁶ Further, a plot should be unified according to the consequences of action, as Aristotle believes happens in real life. One need not accept Aristotelian ethics, though, to accept that literature can ask us to see events within a broad understanding of human life as a whole; in other words, to understand any given plot one must ask not just, “what are the events of this play,” but rather, “what do the events of the plot show us about the nature and order of human life?”.

Responses to this question can easily become evaluative, but they ought not to, even though plot in the Aristotelian sense illustrates many values; again, “what does the plot’s representation of events mean?” is not to ask, “are these meanings good?”. For many critics, of course, the two questions often overlap, and in Aristotle himself the definition of a tragic plot becomes explicitly evaluative; the plot of a good tragedy shows a good but flawed man passing “from happiness to misery,”⁹⁷ for only then can tragedy arouse “pity and fear” and create *catharsis* in the audience, the experience of which Aristotle values as the purpose of tragedy.⁹⁸ To achieve this purpose, though, the order in which events occur is crucial, and so how the plot is presented becomes another vital source of meaning. Aristotle further draws our attention to the importance of beginnings and endings, and employs terms such as “peripety”⁹⁹ to describe a sudden reversal in the events of the plot; again, these concepts are immediately used evaluatively, as we are told what a good opening and closing is, and peripety is said to work best when achieved in unison with “discovery,” the moment in which characters of the drama move from “ignorance to knowledge.”¹⁰⁰ Also, Aristotle critiques plots whose sequence of events is based on neither “probability or

necessity," calling these "episodic;"¹⁰¹ by contrast, events of the best plots "occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvelous in them than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance."¹⁰² Finally, to appear beautiful the plot must be neither too short nor too long, in order to allow its "unity or wholeness" to be "lost to the beholder."¹⁰³

In the Renaissance, this last concept becomes known as "proportion," a balance without which, according to theorists like George Puttenham, "nothing can be good or beautiful."¹⁰⁴ Other concepts are also translated, often in ways that show the influence of rhetoric. The subject of *mimesis*, as of argument, becomes known as the "matter" of a play (cf. AYL 4.1.74-75, WT 5.2.62). A play itself is commonly called an "argument,"¹⁰⁵ as both Ophelia and Claudius call "The Mousetrap" (Ham. 3.2.139, 232), an example which clearly shows how both the object and order of a *mimesis* could be used to convey a particular meaning. Neoclassical critics also emphasize the moral meaning that could be achieved through plot construction, though there is disagreement about Shakespeare's effectiveness in doing so. Dryden praises Antony and Cleopatra "for the excellency of the moral: since both title characters "were famous patterns of unlawful love" and "their end accordingly was unfortunate";¹⁰⁶ but, Johnson finds Shakespeare's plots "loosely formed," "carelessly pursued," and seemingly written "without any moral purpose."¹⁰⁷

Probably the most coherent attempt by a Shakespearean critic to find meaning in plot construction is A.C. Bradley's chapter "Construction in Shakespeare's Tragedies."¹⁰⁸ Bradley shows the influence of both Aristotle and the nineteenth century German critic Gustav Freytag by asking whether a tragic plot follows a pattern of exposition, development, crisis, and finally catastrophe. Bradley also asks technical questions in order to illustrate Shakespeare's artistic plot construction: "Is there a short arresting scene, related to the central theme of the play, followed by a long exposition of the play's circumstances?"¹⁰⁹ Or, following Coleridge's suggestion that Shakespeare's plots offer "expectation in preference to surprise,"¹¹⁰ Bradley asks, "is suspense generated by having others discuss the offstage hero?"¹¹¹ Similarly, do comments in the play make us aware of "some power which is to influence the whole action to the hero's undoing?"¹¹² Further, "How does the power lead to a crisis in which opposing forces meet?"¹¹³ Also, does the subplot or "double action" give "a most effective contrast" to the main plot or does it, as in King

Lear, “simply [repeat] the theme of the main story?”¹¹⁴ Bradley, though, is also critical at times of Shakespeare’s construction, especially critiquing the “inconsistencies and contradictions” which sometimes give rise to questions that “make it impossible to answer with certainty.”¹¹⁵

In general, Bradley’s emphasis on the means rather than the objects of plot imitation has been continued by most twentieth-century critics, though many have written against Bradley’s approach. Madelaine Doran, for example, rejected the relevance of Aristotelian unity of action to Shakespeare, instead asking whether his plays’ coherence might instead be found in a “multiple unity” in which the separate parts retain their independence even while being imaginatively or thematically related to the whole.¹¹⁶ Mark Rose follows Doran in arguing for larger patterns of design that vary from play to play but, like emblems in Renaissance iconography, form structural patterns in which scenes achieve a “multiple unity” by being relatively independent yet acquiring their full meaning only in context; often Rose asks, “does Shakespeare’s design show parallel ‘speaking pictures’ which by way of analogy comment on each other?”. Rose’s approach is only one of many which show how scene construction in Shakespeare makes his plots meaningful. Others ask, “how do units of scenes work together to achieve unity of dramatic theme?”;¹¹⁷ “are there mirror scenes which work to offer parallel ideas?”;¹¹⁸ “do the small scenes use parallelism, antithesis, and verbal echo to parody or comment upon the main actions?”;¹¹⁹ “do the scenes work by accumulation and repetition or is the character transformed from one polar extreme to another?”¹²⁰ “Is suspense generated through expectation of plot,” as Coleridge and Bradley thought, or “is it through comic techniques such as illusion, deceit, disguise, and manipulation.”¹²¹ Often grouped as studies of “dramaturgy,” these are just some of the questions about plot that are asked by Shakespearean critics.

The second Aristotelian category, character, often vies with plot for pride of place. Within Shakespeare studies, it was Bradley himself who put the two on equal footing by arguing that a play “may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action;”¹²² the importance one assigns to plot rather than character, Bradley suggests, may depend on one’s view of destiny as opposed to individual agency.¹²³ Following Aristotle in seeing character as “that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents,”¹²⁴ Bradley argues that for Shakespeare’s tragic heroes “action is essentially the expression of character.”¹²⁵ Whichever

category is more important, critical discussion of character within Shakespeare studies has evolved, in ways analogous to the discussion of plot, from the neoclassical emphasis upon realism to twentieth-century concern with artistic technique, though some critics do manage to keep a foot in both camps.

Most neoclassical criticism focuses on plot and ethics rather than character, but Pope argues that "every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual as those in life itself," and claims that if "the names attached to the lines were deleted, one could reassign them according to each character's unique traits."¹²⁶ Pope thus teaches us to ask the question of classical decorum: "do the traits of a character match the speech they have been given?". Pope's tendency to see the characters as real, historical persons is continued by Maurice Morgann, who rejects traditional views of Falstaff as a coward and instead finds "secret impressions" of courage in him.¹²⁷ Falstaff is far from being a one dimensional character, and so Morgann concludes that Shakespeare's characters can be interpreted

rather as Historic than Dramatic beings; and, when occasion requires, to account for their conduct from the *whole* of character, from general principles, from latent motives, and from policies not avowed.¹²⁸

Johnson ridicules Morgann for failing to see Falstaff's cowardice, but in his own famous discussion of Falstaff—which liberally mixes praise of his humanity and condemnation of his vices¹²⁹—he also describes Falstaff as a complex human person. Neoclassical critics, then, teach us to ask, "in what ways does a Shakespearean character resemble a human person?". This approach, in turn, leads character study directly to evaluative questions such as, "can the character be a role model serving to illustrate positive human qualities?".

A significantly different, though not contradictory, approach to character study was taken by the Romantics. Though Hazlitt continues to speak of Shakespeare's characters as "historical figures,"¹³⁰ he also calls for the audience to identify with characters, and affirms, "It is we who are Hamlet."¹³¹ For Hazlitt, the question to ask of characters is, "are we like them?". Coleridge similarly argues that "in the plays of Shakespeare every man sees himself,"¹³² but then again suggests the importance of poetic imagination by dividing Shakespearean characters into those "where the real is disguised in the ideal, and those where the ideal is concealed to us from the

real."¹³³

In many ways, Bradley synthesizes neoclassical and romantic approaches to character by uniting Johnson's common sense and theatrical sensibility with Coleridge's poetic sensibility. Often, he considers Shakespeare's characters as human beings, and discussion of their actions is mixed with analysis of emotions, ideas, and motives. It is "often not realized by his critics," but Bradley "was a keen playgoer," and he "thought of his work as advice to his players."¹³⁴ Much like an actor preparing for a role, Bradley often tests various theories about a character against the evidence of the text. This approach keeps Bradley's analysis more focused upon the world of the play than he is often given credit for, and thus the question Bradley asks may be stated, "within the world of the play, how does this character reveal his or her humanity?"

Many twentieth-century approaches to character are written against Bradley in particular, and against the approach to the characters as real in general. The most famous of these is L.C. Knights' "How many children had Lady Macbeth?", whose title is a satirical jab at the attempt to construct historical biography for Shakespearean characters. J.I. Stewart also rejects "psychological" approaches to Shakespeare's characters, regarding their motives as "essentially symbolical" and determined by the needs of the play's plot.¹³⁵ E.E. Stoll is perhaps the primary theorist of the movement, and in stark contrast to Morgann sees Falstaff as a composite of conventional characters such as a coward, *miles gloriosus*, vice, clown, fool.¹³⁶ Stoll's standard question is, "what literary or theatrical historical conventions are embodied in this character?"

Inevitably, the two opposing views of character are combined by a critic, and hence Bernard Spivack asks both the Bradleyian and Stollian questions, and concludes that Iago is both a man and a vice figure.¹³⁷ Historical and literary research into conventions of character representation has perhaps made Stoll's approach more common in twentieth-century criticism, but the questions have varied to include more analysis of the ways character is created. Recognizing that not all characters are suited to their speeches, some have asked, "are there 'commenting characters' whose speeches normally, or occasionally, reveal not their own character but rather other characters or themes within the play?"¹³⁸ When character is revealed, what is the purpose of the soliloquy? Does the isolation of the actor create a metaphor of inner experience in which a symbolic partner, whether an object or a personified idea, creates a dialogue?¹³⁹ Also, following Schlegel's notion that Shakespeare's main characters are "the glass in which the others are

reflected,"¹⁴⁰ other critics have asked whether some characters are foils illuminating the hero of a play. A character such as Prince Hal is thus understood as a median between the extremes of Falstaff and Hotspur.¹⁴¹ Consideration of Shakespearean characters as human representations has also remained influential, as characters have been analyzed as subjects for psychoanalysis,¹⁴² and in terms of Shakespeare's "intuitive grasp of psychology."¹⁴³ Also, critics have argued that Shakespeare's characters are not only psychologically but also sociologically representative of human society, though some see them representing a diversity of classes,¹⁴⁴ others as an "antagonistic dialogue of class voices."¹⁴⁵ Finally, characters have again been seen as "an attempt to engage with reality,"¹⁴⁶ thus suggesting once more the wide variety of questions about character that may be asked of Shakespearean drama.

Aristotle regards "thought" as a character's ideas distinct from his moral choices, and links it to a rhetorician's development of speeches; "thought" is all that characters "say when proving or disproving some particular point, or enunciating some universal proposition."¹⁴⁷ Shakespearean criticism has not usually made so sharp a distinction, but thought remains a useful category for describing many modes of Shakespearean meaning that are distinct from plot or the characters who act the events. Individual speeches can be about a particular idea, such as Ulysses' speech on order (*Tro.* 1.3.75-137), and then critics may ask the same question they would put to an orator, "what are the ideas presented in this speech, and how are they developed?" Further, because Shakespeare's characters typically think not just in abstract ideas but also in concrete images, the rhetorical figures used to develop poetry are also often identifiable within individual speeches. As well, the effect of individual speeches upon the characters who listen to them is another primary source of meaning; "what influence do the speeches of individual characters have upon other characters within the play?" is a basic question for dramatic criticism. Further, when images or ideas are shown to occur in the thought of not just one but several speakers in a play, they are said to be "reiterative". Reiterative imagery was first studied as a means of biographical criticism,¹⁴⁸ but it can also illuminate the world of a play—such as in the animal imagery of *King Lear*--and so it has become a widely used critical approach. Essentially, critics of reiterative imagery ask, "what do the repeated images used by diverse Shakespearean characters tell us about the tone, atmosphere, character and theme of a play?"¹⁴⁹ Some critics, notably G. Wilson Knight, have so

stressed the importance of imagery that for them the central question becomes, “what can Shakespeare’s work mean if read as a poem rather than a play?”.

Ideas, too, are often seen as reiterative, and when applied to a play as a whole they are often called “themes,” a term which the OED defines as “the subject of a discourse, discussion, conversation, meditation, or composition; a topic;”¹⁵⁰ the final synonym, particularly, suggests the kinship of themes with topics used to develop orations in rhetoric. This use of the term also occurs in Shakespeare, as when Falstaff responds to almost everyone else in The Merry Wives of Windsor chiding him for his vices by saying, “Well, I am your theme” (Wiv. 5.4.161). In modern criticism, however, the term has been widened to include almost all aspects of meaning mediated by plot, character, and thought. Unsurprisingly, so many themes have been found in Shakespeare’s plays, representing so many systems of thought, that it is impossible even to suggest their full range. More useful, though, is reflection on the process of finding and validating themes. To clarify this process, it is helpful to consider the partially valid but finally extreme position of Richard Levin, a critic who denies entirely the validity of thematic criticism.

In Levin’s view, thematic critics invalidly abstract from the reality of drama by selecting “particular components of the drama and making them the representatives or exemplars of a general class, which then becomes the subject of the play and of the critic’s analysis.”¹⁵¹ Such a reading, Levin believes, “leads us away” from the play rather than back into it,¹⁵² and is unconvincing because “the significance of the facts” that the critic selects are “defined in advance by the thesis they are intended to prove.”¹⁵³ Further, thematic study fails to discuss how “plays produce any emotional effect in us.”¹⁵⁴ Most importantly, because plays “present us with particular actions, from which we can abstract all sorts of general questions if we have a mind to,”¹⁵⁵ there exists “no rational basis for choosing one possible theme of a play over another,”¹⁵⁶ and thus thematic readings are incommensurable. Levin’s solution is to cease abstraction and focus critical attention on the particular circumstances unique to the characters of each play. Their uniqueness is the opposite of “some abstract truism” produced by thematic criticism and, paradoxically, becomes for Levin the source of literature’s true universality: Shakespeare’s characters are “unique personalities sharing and calling out to our common humanity.”¹⁵⁷ Levin does modify this basic position by stating that some plays, such as medieval moralities, “really are about a central theme,

and thus 'call for' thematic or allegorical commentary."¹⁵⁸ He confidently asserts, however, that Renaissance plays "certainly seem to be literal representations of individual actions," and that thematic critics err when they make the particular characters of these plays "function as mere representatives" of the ideas.¹⁵⁹

In response to Levin, it must first be noted that many themes are found in concrete actions and images, such as war in Hamlet or blood in Macbeth. Yet even setting such cases aside, the broader question is whether Shakespeare's plays teach ideas; more precisely, "do they portray characters or events in a patterned way which seeks to teach ideas?". This is the primary question which a thematic critic asks, but Levin's rhetoric creates a strawman thematist who makes characters "mere representatives of ideas," rather than figures who have concrete human characteristics as well as thinking minds, the thoughts of which a dramatist might emphasize. These ideas are not solely what a Shakespearean play is about, but one cannot authentically deny that 1 Henry IV teaches us about honour through three very diverse perspectives, or that Othello teaches us about jealousy, again from a variety of characters. Levin portrays thematists as searching for "one central theme," and certainly he is right to reject such a reductionist approach, but not even in medieval allegories is "one theme" to be found; rather there are at least four levels of allegorical meaning (literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical), each level of which could include multiple meanings. Whether thematic readings are incommensurable, further, depends on rational debate and textual evidence, evidence that must include the findings of thematic critics. Levin is right, however, that often such readings do not test their accuracy against traditional readings, and it is important to clarify how evidence for a theme ought to be gathered.

First, there is a clear division between themes which are the thoughts of individual characters, and themes suggested by the play as a whole. For the former, the character's thought must be understood in the context of plot and character development, and the meaning of individual speeches examined closely; here the question is, "what does this character think about?". For the latter, repetition of ideas and the relative role and position of each speaker in the play must be considered, with key moments in the plot taking priority. Yet, the thought of minor characters can also take on thematic importance via the statements of "gnomic" wisdom which some have found to be excessive in Shakespeare;¹⁶⁰ in general, this approach suggests a broader question of meaning: "what does the play as a whole ask us to think about?". Such criticism often leads to a

statement of the values taught by the play, as is often the case in the work of Wilson Knight, L.C. Knights,¹⁶¹ and Derek Traversi. More recently, other critics have stressed that, due to Shakespeare's tendency to maximize dramatic conflict, the plays themselves often present contradictory themes. Norman Rabkin defines Shakespeare's method of depicting human conflict as "complementary," a concept used in physics to describe unavoidable paradoxes, and argues that his plays force us to make value judgements concerning the action and the characters, yet simultaneously make us realize that any such judgement is reductionistic.¹⁶² The value of this method has been discussed by Harriet Hawkins; yet, it is also possible to state the "complementary" values of the plays, described as themes, before evaluating them according to broader horizons of value.

Standing in relation to theme, as microcosm of meaning to the macrocosm of thought, is "diction." For Aristotle, this term means much more than simply "word choice"; rather, diction includes all stylistic techniques for expressing thought.¹⁶³ Like most Renaissance artists, Shakespeare is influenced by both Christian and classical modes of diction. As already noted, the classical trivium was thoroughly taught to Elizabethan grammar school children, who learned the more than two hundred figures taught by classical authors such as Cicero and Quintilian. Renaissance English authors such as Wilson, Puttenham and Peacham further popularized rhetorical figures by citing examples from the Bible and English poets such as Spenser to complement classical examples. Through the precise vocabulary of elocution, Renaissance rhetoricians demonstrate that it becomes possible to name and describe many of the manifold ways in which poetic language signifies. Rhetoric's capacity to categorize and name a wide variety of linguistic techniques has made it especially useful to understanding Shakespeare's figurative language.¹⁶⁴ As Miriam Joseph, especially, was able to show, Shakespeare's figurative language can be classified as either tropes (such as metaphor or metonymy, in which the figure changes the meaning of the words) or schemes (such as anaphora or anadiplosis, in which there is artful arrangement of words).¹⁶⁵ Provided that rhetorical analysis is integrated with other aspects of a poet's purposes, the question asked need not be so inane or pedantic as Holofernes' repetitive rant of, "What is the figure? What is the figure?" (LLL 5.1.64); rather, it can be, "how does this figure of language contribute to dramatic meaning?"

As for the Christian influence upon his diction, Shakespeare is again like many

Renaissance artists in that he inherits from medieval literature and the Bible the tendency, promoted by Christianity's Incarnational theology, to find transcendent meaning in the concrete world.¹⁶⁶ This concrete theology is reflected in signifying systems such as allegory and typology, though modern critics often miss this point by seeing these systems as abstract. Allegory is commonly defined in classical or Renaissance rhetoric--and diction is a category in which poetics and rhetoric directly overlap--as a "continued metaphor."¹⁶⁷ Yet, as Isabel Rivers notes, allegory is not primarily a "matter of technique" but rather has "much wider implications," originating "in a religious frame of mind, which sees nature and history as charged with hidden divine meanings that can be revealed to the diligent seeker."¹⁶⁸ Medieval literature provides the most examples of allegory, though the influence of classical rhetoric made it unlikely that the complete, four-fold method of medieval interpretation would survive intact into the Renaissance. How much allegorical or typological theory was taught directly to Shakespeare is unclear, yet what certainly did survive in Shakespeare's work are many medieval *topoi* and tropes, such as the Boethian conflict between Lady Philosophy's promise of providence and Dame Fortune's fiery wheel (Rom. 3.1.136; Lr. 4.7.45-46), or the notion of the world or the self as a book authored by God (R2 4.1.273-75). Part of the meaning of these images is certainly abstract, and it can be argued that in medieval art "the function of figurative expression was not to arouse spontaneous emotional attitudes based on the personal experience of the observer, but to encourage the observer to seek an abstract pattern of philosophical significance beneath the symbolic configuration."¹⁶⁹ For anyone who acknowledges the impact of ideas on human life, however, such patterns can also be emotionally moving. For many allegorical texts, such as medieval morality plays, Piers Plowman, or The Faerie Queene, the key critical question is, "what might an image or idea represent, and why is that image appropriate for representing the various figurative meanings?". Shakespeare has been seen as writing in another tradition of allegory, so that his characters are rarely "abstractions representing this or that vice or virtue," but rather "they contain and adumbrate certain principles, not in a crude or neat form, but mixed with other human qualities."¹⁷⁰ For Shakespeare as for Dante, Francis Fergusson argues, "allegory rises essentially out of the dramatic interplay of 'real' people," and "fictions are intended to reflect not our concepts but the actual world, in which God's own meaning was supposed to be embodied (if only we could learn to see it) just as it was supposed to be in the events recorded in Scripture."¹⁷¹

This description of allegory, however, comes very close to another widely practiced way in which many Renaissance poets mediated meaning, typology. Typology is a close cousin of allegory, related by biblical exegesis, but it differs from allegory in that its figurative senses are believed by the poet to be historical rather than fictional. For typology, the question is, “what other historical events, images, ideas or persons are shown to be analogous to the ‘type’ presently being portrayed?”. Again, the literal sense is never subsumed by but rather includes abstract ideas, and again it has been argued that Shakespeare “writes in that tradition” by giving “the story as real, but as having the moral and religious meanings that make it significant.”¹⁷² Whether this view can be demonstrated depends on the evidence of a particular play, but neither this nor any other mediation of meaning should be ruled out before reading actually occurs.

Dramatic meaning includes far more than words, however, and it has been one of the main achievements of Shakespeare criticism over the past thirty years to balance the “play as poem” approach with an emphasis on the meaning conveyed only in performance.¹⁷³ The history of performance is the basic resource of this field, and not only written reviews of performance but also recorded performances on audio and video tape provide ample opportunity for Shakespearean critics to ask, “how has a play been performed?”¹⁷⁴ Criticism has focused on a number of performance elements, the most basic categories perhaps being Aristotle’s “song and spectacle.” The vital role of music in Shakespearean drama has been explored by critics who have asked the historical question, “what music has been used for Shakespearean plays?”,¹⁷⁵ and the critical question, “how does the song aid in developing the plot, character, theme, or the mood of the play?”.¹⁷⁶ The importance of the dances that often accompany the music of Shakespearean comedy has been considered, the central question being, “is the dance a symbol of cosmic harmony, as in so much Renaissance thought?”.¹⁷⁷ Other critics of spectacle have also asked, “how did other spectacular Renaissance cultural forms, such as tournaments, funeral processions, and court masques, affect the Renaissance theatre?”.¹⁷⁸

Along with song and spectacle, two other classical categories highly relevant to performance stem from “delivery.” This fifth category of rhetoric was divided into “*pronuntiatio*,” the method for pronouncing a speech, and “*actio*,” the gestures that accompany the speech. Due to extensive changes in English pronunciation habits over the past four hundred years, the initial

question must be historical: "how were Shakespeare's words pronounced?".¹⁷⁹ The answers to this question can affect meaning, as in the homonymic puns (known as *paronomasia*) of which Shakespeare was so fond.¹⁸⁰ Rhetoric also gave specific suggestions for the delivery to accompany speeches, and it has been asked, "how did *actio* influence the gestures of Renaissance actors?".¹⁸¹ Beyond these classical categories, but mindful of both the Renaissance and the modern theatre, Shakespearean performance criticism has followed the pioneering efforts of Harley Granville-Barker to find a number of ways in which to answer the question, "how can criticism help both to understand and support the production of plays for the living stage?". For example, historically minded critics use emblem books such as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, which helped to make iconography highly popular and influential during the Renaissance, in order to ask, "how does an understanding of the emblem tradition illuminate the symbolic meanings present in Shakespearean performance?".¹⁸² Other scholars have studied the material conditions of Renaissance theatre and asked, "how was dramatic meaning affected by the Elizabethan stage, with its flexibility and platform focus, its acting conventions, and spacing of characters?".¹⁸³ Even more specifically, "how could stage directions and other stage conventions be used to indicate action or a character's state of mind?".¹⁸⁴ The advice of actors, beginning of course with Hamlet telling his players to "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" (3.2.17-18), is highly relevant to performance, and many critics have asked modern actors to answer, "how should a particular Shakespearean role be played?".¹⁸⁵ As well, directors have been asked, "how did you direct your Shakespearean production?".¹⁸⁶ Another subtle area of dramatic meaning, one much more noticeable in performance, has been explored by critics who have asked, "how is meaning created, during performance, by moments of silence within the text?".¹⁸⁷ Finally, and perhaps most comprehensively, it has been asked, "how do visual, aural, and kinetic mediums work together in Shakespeare's plays to promote imaginative audience participation in onstage events?".¹⁸⁸

Performance criticism thus demonstrates, like the other Aristotelian categories and their Renaissance and modern critical analogues, that Shakespearean plays mediate meaning in a wide variety of ways. As noted throughout the above survey of Shakespearean interpretation, questions of value often arise from particular aspects of meaning, and these evaluative questions are most practically considered during the process of interpretation. One may also, however, ask questions

of value not just about individual aspects of dramatic meaning, but also about the value of the play as a whole. Just as Shakespearean criticism has generated questions in order to explore meaning, so many schools of criticism have also developed methods of inquiry into the broader value of Shakespeare's plays.

Evaluative Approaches to Shakespeare I: Origins to the Romantics

Evaluative criticism takes its simplest and usually initial form in censure or praise that barely suggests an artist's qualities. For example, Ben Jonson's elegy, published in the first Folio, praises Shakespeare by calling him, "Soul of the age!" and declares him worthy of comparison to classical dramatists.¹⁸⁹ However, by noting Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek" (1.31), Jonson helps to establish the image of Shakespeare as unlearned, and the poet of nature rather than art. Milton then perpetuates this image by calling Shakespeare "fancy's child," whose plays "warble his native wood-notes wild" ("L'Allegro" 133-34). In neoclassical criticism, this opposition is often stressed so as to devalue Shakespeare for failing to follow classical dicta of art such as the three unities, but the greatest of the neoclassicals all praise Shakespeare for this very failure, seeing him as therefore closer to the life revealed in nature. Dryden is perhaps the least analytical, and in his passionate praise--"I admire [Jonson], but I love Shakespeare"¹⁹⁰--he can sound bardolatrous. More critically, Dryden suggests reasons for Shakespeare's greatness by saying that, for Shakespeare, "the images of Nature were still present to him," and "when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too."¹⁹¹ Following Dryden, Pope too makes the concept of nature central--seeing it as "at once the source, and end, and test of art"¹⁹²--and also praises Shakespeare as a poet of nature who cannot be judged by foreign artistic laws.

Samuel Johnson follows these neoclassical writers in using nature as a synonym for all reality not created by humans, and in following the Horatian dictum that the purpose of art is to teach and delight; he then combines these two principles: "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature."¹⁹³ For Johnson, Shakespeare is "the poet of nature" because he "holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life."¹⁹⁴ What seems to be an overly simplistic acceptance of artistic realism is modified and strengthened, however, when Johnson defends Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time and place. Neoclassical criteria, Johnson argues, "arise from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible," but in fact, for sane theatre audiences, "it is false, that any representation is mistaken for

reality."¹⁹⁵ Rather, literary "imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind."¹⁹⁶ As Harriet Hawkins notes, this more sophisticated understanding of literary *mimesis* allows us to value art not just for moments when it teaches absolute truth, but also when it brings to mind real perceptions or even fictions with no basis in extra-human reality; fictions, paradoxically, "may provide us with some of our best defenses against certain ideological fictions that have, historically, been passed off on us as scientific fact."¹⁹⁷ Johnson is also criticized as simplistic for his remark that Shakespeare "seems to write without a moral purpose" because he often "makes no just distribution of good or evil."¹⁹⁸ However, injustice is a central reality of human life, and here Johnson is calling not for reality, not for what is, but rather for Sidney's view that the poet shows, "what should or should not be."¹⁹⁹ Johnson's fuller position is summarized when he says that "the greatest graces of a play are to copy nature and instruct life";²⁰⁰ fairly applying this evaluative principle to Shakespeare would mean that Johnson's central evaluative question is, "Does Shakespearean drama bring human realities to the mind of the audience?"

Such a question seems comprehensive, but it is the reemphasis of another of Sidney's ideas that signals a distinctive transition from neoclassical to Romantic evaluations of Shakespeare. At the inaugural Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare festival of 1769, actor David Garrick, Johnson's former pupil, "precipitated the concepts of romanticism"²⁰¹ in a famous ode which praised, "of things more than mortal sweet Shakespeare would dream."²⁰² The key Romantic concept for such poetic flights, of course, is imagination, which Hazlitt helps contrast to neoclassical realism by saying first that "Poetry is an imitation of nature," yet adding, "but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature."²⁰³ To clarify further the importance of the active human mind in understanding reality, Hazlitt writes, "the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations."²⁰⁴ In contrasting imagination and imitative realism, Hazlitt here limits *mimesis* in a way that would be foreign to Aristotle or Sidney; heavily influenced by Kant through Schlegel, the Romantics are preeminently concerned with reality as it is perceived by the human mind and emotions. Very often, the Romantics hold this reality to be a union of opposites, a unity in diversity or, in Coleridge's phrase, a "multeity in unity."²⁰⁵

Shakespeare, preeminently, is the poet who, through his ability to empathize with the human condition, is able to unite in his dramas the fantastically diverse and complex world of the human imagination. Thus William Richardson calls Shakespeare, "the Proteus of the drama; he changes himself into every character, and enters easily into every condition of human nature;"²⁰⁶ for Hazlitt, Shakespeare "was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be ... his genius shone equally on the evil and the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar;"²⁰⁷ Coleridge argues that, in contrast to Milton who "attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own ideal," instead "myriad-minded"²⁰⁸ Shakespeare "darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion;"²⁰⁹ for Keats, "the excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with beauty and truth." According to Keats, this quality is exemplified in King Lear and explained by Shakespeare's "negative capability," the capacity "of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."²¹⁰

All of these formulations, especially Keats', can appear to encourage passive acceptance of the complexity of life, but the Romantic emphasis on the active imagination also provides an ethic of audience response. Hazlitt, for example, notes that Shakespeare's Twelfth Night "makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them."²¹¹ Coleridge, though he defines a poem as a composition which proposes "for its immediate object pleasure, not truth,"²¹² also sees ethics at the heart of Shakespeare's vision, saying that he always took "the high road of life" and that he "never clothed vice in the garb of virtue."²¹³ Surely Coleridge would also have approved of Shelley's following statement, which is perhaps at the heart of the Romantic poetic ethic:

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.²¹⁴

Shakespeare, the Romantics agree, is the supreme exemplar of this "going out of our own nature." Hence, when we come to his work we should preeminently ask this evaluative question: 'Does

Shakespearean drama cause an audience to feel the sorrows and joys offered by the human imagination?'.

Evaluative Approaches to Shakespeare II: Victorians to the New Critics

The next distinctive form of Shakespearean evaluation, Victorian criticism, distinguishes itself by the attempts of critics like Arnold to have literature replace religion, which was thought to be discredited by science. Shakespearean Victorians engaged in this project were influenced by the German critic Gervinus,²¹⁵ who argues that Shakespeare "builds a system of morality upon nature and reason, a system independent of religious considerations."²¹⁶ Edward Dowden saw Shakespeare's plays as spiritual biography, but the key to his evaluation was drama's ability to convey a Victorian scientific world view; Shakespeare shows a "rich feeling for positive, concrete fact."²¹⁷ In a paradoxical but typically Victorian approach to ethics, Dowden argues that Elizabethan drama is "without an ethical tendency" but it

yet produces an ethical effect. A faithful presentation of the facts of the world does not leave us indifferent to good and evil, but rather rouses within us, more than all maxims and preaching can, an inextinguishable loyalty to good.²¹⁸

Not all Victorians agree with Dowden. Shaw and Tolstoy argue that Shakespeare was not only irreligious but also a poor teacher of moral truth. Shaw condemned Shakespeare for his "complete deficiency in that highest sphere of thought, in which poetry embraces religion, philosophy, morality, and the bearing of these on communities."²¹⁹ Similarly, Tolstoy argues that the "fundamental inner cause of Shakespeare's fame was, and is, that his drama responded to the irreligious and immoral attitude of the upper classes of our world,"²²⁰ and denounced his plays because they lack a "religious basis."²²¹

Bradley does much to reestablish Shakespeare's status as a serious poet, primarily by extending his technique of inquiry on technical questions of construction to the broadest philosophical questions. To cite just one example of this approach, Bradley observes that

The presence in King Lear of so large a number of characters in whom love or self-seeking is so extreme has another effect. They do not merely inspire in us emotions of unusual strength, but they also stir the intellect to wonder and speculation. How can there be such men and women? we ask ourselves. How comes it that humanity can take such absolutely opposite forms? And, in particular, to what omission of elements

which should be present in human nature, or, if there is no omission, to what distortion of these elements is it due that such beings as these come to exist?"²²²

The questions here justify Gary Taylor's comment that "Bradley, like Dowden and almost every other major Victorian critic, therefore set out to decide from Shakespeare's work Shakespeare's philosophical conclusions about the nature of human life."²²³ Taylor critiques Bradley, though, for failing to understand Lear's insane commentary on adultery in terms of the link between political and parental authority stressed in the Renaissance; but, it is unsurprising that pioneering philosophical criticism is historically inadequate. Taylor's critique becomes far too harsh, certainly, when he concludes that "Bradley did not explain Lear's speeches in terms of sexual or psychological politics because Bradley did not think like Shakespeare; Bradley thought like Dowden."²²⁴ While no critic has convincingly shown him or her self to entirely "think like Shakespeare," Bradley continues the just cited commentary on King Lear by pointing out that his very questions are also asked by Lear himself,²²⁵ only with a good deal more poetry and passion: "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" (3.6.77-78). Bradley's philosophical approach is partial and requires historical supplements, but its search for value has also profoundly influenced subsequent humanist approaches to Shakespeare, such as the poetic, philosophical readings of Shakespeare given by Mark Van Doren. The following description of Van Doren's Columbia Shakespeare class, by Van Doren's student Thomas Merton, illustrates the influence of Bradley's approach, and its appeal to a deeply spiritual human being:

It was the only place where I ever heard anything really sensible about any of the things that were really important--life, death, time, love, sorrow, fear, wisdom, suffering, eternity ... the material of literature and especially of drama is chiefly human acts--that is, free acts, moral acts. And as a matter of fact, literature, drama, poetry, make certain statements about these acts which can be made no other way.²²⁶

Bradley's ethical approach has also influenced many other twentieth-century critics. For example, Alfred Harbage argues that the marriages which conclude Shakespearean comedy are profoundly moral, not simply "happy endings," while by contrast "Adultery in Shakespeare is never treated with humor, tolerance, or "understanding."²²⁷ Harbage contrasts Shakespeare's "popular drama," with its high ratio of good to evil characters and condemnation of adultery and other vices, with the "coterie drama" of Jonson or Marston and its focus on vice. However,

Harbage differs from Bradley and the neoclassicals in believing that evil is found in Shakespeare's plays not to imitate life, but rather simply to engage our attention. Bradley also influences the work of the New Critics who, despite their theoretical rejection of the "affective fallacy,"²²⁸ often offer an ethical comment clothed within an interpretation. Harriet Hawkins further notes that much twentieth-century Shakespearean criticism "was written in dialectical opposition" to Bradley and Romantic criticism, but that the Romantics' ethical praise was often simply reversed; thus Hawkins observes that "where Romantic critics had lauded the passionate rebels and sinners of Elizabethan drama, twentieth-century critics condemned them, and proclaimed morally orthodox the identical plays that had previously been found radically heterodox."²²⁹ Lacking a unifying metaphysical principle such as "nature," "imagination," or "fact," these New Critics nevertheless hold implicit ethical foundations and ask, "how do Shakespeare's plays use both good and evil characters to teach Renaissance moral values?". Unfortunately, few of these critics raise the further ethical question--"how valuable are these Renaissance values?"--though their work does make such questions possible.

Explicitly Evaluative Approaches to Shakespeare in Contemporary Criticism

Since New Criticism, a number of other critical schools have emerged that do have explicit philosophical foundations, and often pose explicitly evaluative questions. Many of these schools derive from subjects other than literature, and thus ask us to consider the value both of the literature that they study, and of the theories they hold about non-literary subjects. No school has suffered more from this dual evaluation than psychoanalytic criticism because, as one critic notes, "much of the resistance to Freudian interpretations is based on dissatisfaction with Freudian theory itself."²³⁰ Still, writers such as Ernest Jones, Norman Holland, and even the actor Lawrence Olivier find value in Shakespeare's plays by asking, "to what extent do Shakespearean characters reveal the unconscious life of the mind that Freudian theory has shown to be characteristic of humanity in general?". Psychoanalytic theory is not limited to Freud, of course, and the same question could be asked by setting as evaluative criteria the theories of other psychologists, such as Jung, Adler, Lacan, or Bowlby.

Also derived from a founding father, of course, is Marxist criticism. Especially after the near world-wide collapse of communism, the theories of Marx are rejected in many quarters, as commonly as those of Freud. Yet Marxist theory provides insight into far broader areas of human

life, exploring not just the psychology of the proletariat and bourgeois, but also the nature and value of history, economics, political science and sociology. Marxist critics evaluating Shakespeare can thus ask, "do any aspects of Shakespeare's plays illuminate those areas of philosophy which Marx has shown to be crucial in human history?". The value of these evaluations depends both on whether Shakespeare's plays do evidence Marxist meaning and whether Marxist philosophy teaches truth about human life--though this need not be an all or nothing proposition. Marxist criticism and its British cousin, cultural materialism, may illuminate many economic or political aspects of Shakespeare's plays which portray capitalist practices validly critiqued by Marx.²³¹ From a Marxist position, the purpose of philosophy and therefore criticism as well can never be simply to understand the world; as Marx said, "the point is to change it;"²³² taking this point of departure, then, Marxists evaluating Shakespeare want us to ask, "how can our reading of Shakespearean plays contribute to the ultimate goal of a classless society?".

Shakespearean criticism might seem like a roundabout way to effect such changes, but as cultural materialist Alan Sinfield puts it in his Political Shakespeare, "Teaching Shakespeare's plays and writing books about them is unlikely to bring down capitalism, but it is a point for intervention."²³³

Contemporary Marxist critics also form alliances with other groups who want to dismantle oppressive structures in capitalist society. Thus Graham Holderness' Shakespearean criticism seeks to transform a "social order that exploits people on grounds of race, gender, sexuality and class."²³⁴

Occasionally, Marxist criticism also reads literature not for historical realism but rather for allegory, and for this reason Vickers groups it with Christian allegorical readings. However, Vickers misquotes Coleridge as saying that allegory is "an abstraction of abstract notions into a picture language,"²³⁵ and ignores the four-fold method of medieval Christian allegory. More importantly, for both Marxism and Christianity, Vickers misses the point of allegory: to express symbolically an understanding of some aspect of human reality, whether that reality be historical or spiritual. Allegorical criticism is only one way by which Christians express this understanding. Drawing on a much longer history than modern ideologies, Christians have explored the value of Christ's gospel in almost all areas of human life. Thus, when Christians read Shakespeare in an evaluative way, asking, "do Shakespeare's plays teach us some aspects of Christ's gospel?", answers come from a wide range of viewpoints which presuppose an understanding of the

complexity of Christian theology. As Roy Battenhouse puts it:

We can expect the Christian dimension of Shakespeare's work to be downplayed or misrepresented by readers whose habitual patterns of sensibility resist the acknowledgement of Christian mystery. St. Paul recognized that to rationalists the cross would seem scandalous, while to legalistic moralists it was a stumbling block. He had to appeal beyond these obstacles to a latent capacity in human beings to learn through crisis-experience the reality of a divinely reasonable love and its higher moral law. Shakespeare's plays still exercise occasionally a similar function for some of their spectators today.²³⁶

Despite the embattled tone of this comment, Battenhouse's ethical imperative applies to any criticism founded upon a highly complex system of thought and practice, such as a world religion or philosophy: expect the work of such critics to be initially beyond one's own horizons, and resolve to understand sympathetically its meaning before judging its value. Of course, such a judgement must eventually take place and, like Marxist readings, the value of Christian evaluations likewise depends upon an accurate interpretation and evaluation both of Shakespeare and an external belief system.

Such empathy is certainly required to appreciate the value of deconstruction. Primarily presenting itself as a theory of meaning, deconstruction argues that stable, definitive interpretation is impossible. Deconstruction also clearly derives from its foundational philosophical fathers, Nietzsche and Saussure, especially as they are read by Derrida. It is therefore unsurprising that the values of this movement can be found, to cite Barthes, in the "pleasure of the text"²³⁷ read relativistically. Although this movement resists definition or categorization, the central evaluative question of deconstruction seems to be, "do Shakespeare's plays evade definitive interpretation and thus provide the pleasures of incoherent relativism?". Shakespearean Howard Felperin, in fact, makes this evaluative aim perfectly clear:

What a deconstructionist like myself repeatedly discovers and increasingly values is the resistance the great text throws up against my efforts to impose my preconceptions upon it, to make it say what I want to hear. I confess I have come to enjoy being led by the text, by its train of signifiers, in directions I could not have predicted and might not initially have wished to go--even if the outcome of being led, indeed 'read,' in this way

is that I end up in the state of aporia without a visa.²³⁸

The crucial question that must be faced by deconstructionists is whether it is the text, or a preconceived desire to live habitually with indeterminate meaning that leaves them “without a visa.” Thus, their interpretations must be tested against others which do claim to provide clear mediations of meaning. When the state of aporia cannot be left, however, the deconstructionist’s ability to enjoy its climate may add another dimension to the value of Shakespeare’s text.

The other prominent contemporary theory derived from Nietzsche, this time by way of Foucault, is New Historicism. It is also primarily a technique of interpretation, but one which clearly holds fundamental values that govern its approach to Shakespeare. Very often, New Historicist readings explore the relationship between language, culture, and power in ways suggested by Foucault’s philosophy. For example, New Historicists will ask whether texts reveal that the supposedly “autonomous self and text are mere holograms, effects that intersecting institutions produce”; or, often in alliance with post-colonial critics or critics concerned with race, New Historicists ask if “selves and texts are defined by their relation to hostile others (despised and feared Indians, Jews, Blacks) and disciplinary power (the King, Religion, Masculinity).”²³⁹ Such questions are evaluative because they ask literary texts to illustrate the truth of Foucault’s theories of power relations within cultures. In short, the New Historicist question is, “do Shakespeare’s plays teach us to understand cultural power in ways similar to the theories of Foucault?”. Like Marxist or cultural materialist criticism, eventually this understanding is valued for how it might change the world, although the New Historicists tend to speak more of how power relations have succeeded in containing subversive political practices rather than suggesting how revolution might occur. Prominent Shakespearean New Historicist Stephen Greenblatt closes his discussion of the relationship between the Henry IV plays and Thomas Harriot’s Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia, a 1588 justification of colonialism, by hoping that moderns can reject “the pious humbug with which the English conceal from themselves the rapacity and aggression, or simply the horrible responsibility implicit in their very presence.”²⁴⁰

Another contemporary critical approach which has gained prominence, feminist criticism, also seeks both to understand literature and transform culture, though refreshingly this movement has founding mothers rather than fathers. Feminist theory may also be the most diverse of the contemporary approaches.²⁴¹ Its critical effort, as the editor of a volume of feminist Shakespearean

criticism puts it, "participates in the larger effort of feminism--the liberation of women from oppressive social structures and stereotypes."²⁴² However, views on how this liberation should occur, and how Shakespearean criticism can aid it, vary widely. The most venerable Shakespearean feminist, Anna Jameson, argues that Shakespeare "looked upon women with the spirit of humanity, wisdom, and deep love," and "has done justice to their natural good tendencies and kindly sympathies."²⁴³ For Jameson, Shakespeare's women are excellent role models for modern women, and she cites figures such as Portia for intellect or Juliet for passion by way of example. One might doubt whether Jameson's views would appeal to today's women, but Juliet Dusinberre sees Shakespeare's society as already moving in directions favourable to the rights of women, and suggests that Shakespeare's comic heroines are imaginative prefigurations of the emancipation of women. Marilyn French, too, applauded Shakespeare's female characters as women who transform male legalism and abuse of power into societies based on love and harmony. Much less optimistic, though, is Lisa Jardine, who distinguishes her own approach by seeking rather to show how Shakespeare's plays reflect and participate in patriarchy. The evaluative goals of a more radical feminist approach have been clearly stated by Lynda Boose, who writes that Shakespeare's plays could be used "as a mirror in which modern men and women could recognize--and begin to change--the reflected image of a history of oppressive sexual and familial relations."²⁴⁴ Carol Rutter's interviews with actresses in the Royal Shakespeare Company gives a similar cross-section of views, with some seeing Shakespeare's women as almost invariably supporting roles, while others brand this charge as "absolute balderdash," and argue that normally Shakespeare makes his heroine "the wisest, the brightest, the funniest" character in his plays.²⁴⁵ Perhaps some middle view is closer to the truth, but in any case there is no doubt that feminist questions about the value of Shakespeare's portrayal of gender open new ways to value or devalue Shakespeare's plays.

The same can surely be said of all the just cited evaluative approaches, though they have also been critiqued because in each, as Vickers puts it, "one thought-system is taken over as setting the standards by which Shakespeare should be read."²⁴⁶ Vickers' remedy is to experience "a play or novel 'direct', in itself,"²⁴⁷ but this naive realism is contradicted by his own practice of reading with all the tools of Renaissance rhetoric and literary convention. While the need for evaluations to be tested against the objective meaning of Shakespeare's plays is also central to my approach, a

more profitable reply to the single system evaluators of Shakespeare is the argument that Shakespeare's plays are intrinsically designed to evade single interpretation or evaluation. Murray Krieger has argued that the malleability of Shakespeare's language lies behind the inability of any critical school definitively to interpret Shakespeare's plays,²⁴⁸ while Edward Hubler describes this quality as Shakespeare's "ability to see the many-sidedness of things."²⁴⁹ This rationale of evaluation recalls Romantic concepts such as "negative capability." The most cogent of such critics, Harriet Hawkins, acknowledges her affinities with Shelley.²⁵⁰ Yet this approach is also based on the commonsense view that drama requires inclusion of opposing viewpoints if there is to be enough dramatic conflict to provoke audience interest. Drawing on Borges' belief that books "of a philosophical nature" invariably include "both the thesis and the antithesis, the rigorous pro and con of a doctrine,"²⁵¹ Hawkins argues that Shakespeare's typical dramatic practice "is to stack the deck, then shuffle it, to deal the cards, then leave the game, to let his witnesses plead their own cases, and let the evidence speak for itself," a practice which does "help to account for the richness, as well as the enduring relevance of his plays."²⁵² This very richness, in turn, makes evaluative criticism of Shakespeare highly complex yet always rewarding; Hawkins thinks that it is perhaps because Shakespeare generally tends to confront the strongest case in favour of something with the strongest possible case against it (and vice versa) that his plays often appear to confront us with the very 'books' and 'counterbooks' of life itself. This, of course, has provided his admirers and detractors alike with countless subjects for further speculation about art and life, and the manifold affinities and discrepancies between the two.²⁵³

Some plays clearly suit Hawkins' thesis better than others, and Hawkins herself does not assert that the meaning of every Shakespearean play is equally indeterminate. To assert this would contradict Hawkins' general emphasis on the ability of the text to challenge preconceived theories and her insistent reminder that Shakespeare's plays must be evaluated within the limits of the way their artistic structures mediate meaning.

Conclusion: Evaluating Shakespeare--Method or Madness?

Shakespearean evaluation thus returns, as Lonergan would have predicted, to acknowledging its reciprocal dependence upon interpretation. To return to the methodological considerations with which this chapter began, both forms of criticism are so complex that either

interpretative specialization or an endless dialectic seems inevitable. Lonergan's transcendental questions mitigate against the mere accumulation of specialist data, however, and his goal of critical realism can draw upon most of the just cited approaches by focusing evaluation upon what Shakespeare's plays teach us about reality, defined in the widest mimetic sense. Lonergan's mix of interpretation and evaluation, and his emphasis on drawing upon a wide community of interpretation, may be a method flexible enough to at least promote an understanding of Shakespeare's "infinite variety" (*Ant.* 2.2.235). As Harriet Hawkins notes, "in his knowledge of so many things, his mastery of so many different tricks, Shakespeare is comparable to the fox" rather than the hedgehog who, in Archilochus' proverb, "knows one big thing."²⁵⁴ Shakespeare's ability to mediate manifold meaning is wondrous, yet it also causes Hawkins to ask, "how can a critic cope with a drama where ... absolutely everything counts,"²⁵⁵ and to despair:

assuming that anyone actually could write a critical study examining all the influences that Shakespeare might, conceivably, have assimilated, and discussing all the signal and countersignals, texts and sub-texts, and constructions and deconstructions and reconstructions that interact on, and beneath the surface of a single play, the resulting book might be so long, convoluted, and self-contradictory that its own author (to say nothing of its readers) might finally quail at the sheer volume of verbiage required to spell out what Shakespeare does, with immeasurably more eloquence and impact, in a sixty-page script.²⁵⁶

Hawkins' warning against the folly of attempting a comprehensive study of Shakespeare is well taken, and certainly not even the selection of interpretative or evaluative questions provided by this chapter could be asked, let alone answered, of even a single play. Nevertheless, being aware of these questions guards against the dangers of both specialization and bias, which can lead critics to teach more about either themselves or a subject other than Shakespeare plays; more positively, a descriptive dialectic allows one to employ interpretative resources and evaluative approaches as they are suggested by either the play itself or by traditions of reading that play. Since the functional specialty of this study is a normative dialectic seeking the foundations of Shakespeare's value, the following chapters on each of the romances will first survey the evaluative critical debate, while also noting those interpretative issues upon which this debate has especially turned. Value cannot be simply imposed upon a play, however, and each Shakespearean romance is more

like medieval than modern art in that it often suggests its own value. As modern critic Derek Traversi notes, within each romance one finds not just static objects of knowledge, but rather “a transforming vision of *value*” in which “contemplation of the object[s] of admiration...confers upon them a distinctive quality.”²⁵⁷ Further, as is characteristic of Renaissance rhetoric, each of Shakespeare’s romances itself suggests the purpose of this vision in eloquently sapiential lines. These lines are not summations, but, as statements of purpose, they usefully suggest the focus of each play’s value and, conveniently, can be used to entitle each chapter. With this focus established, my approach then proceeds to a close reading of each play that strives both to interpret validly diverse aspects of the play’s meaning, and also to evaluate the play’s unique mediation of meaning. Usually, my reading is linear because, in the case of Shakespearean drama, this remains the most comprehensive way to evaluate crucial aspects of dramatic meaning, such as plot or character development and thematic emphasis. Finally, the cumulative evaluation of each romance’s mediation of meaning can be summarized within the widest horizons of value, and a suggestion can be made about the way each play contributes to the greater goal of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion to Truth and Goodness. Through this “framework for collaborative creativity,”²⁵⁸ then, and guided by Lonergan’s foundational transcendental questions, perhaps even a dwarf such as myself may gain some insight into the authentic value of Shakespeare’s romances.

Ch. 2 Endnotes

- ¹ Lonergan, Method xi.
- ² Burton 12.
- ³ Taylor, Reinventing 306.
- ⁴ Taylor, Reinventing 306.
- ⁵ Taylor, Reinventing 307.
- ⁶ Taylor, Reinventing 308.
- ⁷ Lonergan, Method 137.
- ⁸ Lonergan, Method 141.
- ⁹ Lonergan, Method 137.
- ¹⁰ Lonergan, Method 6.
- ¹¹ Lonergan, Method 136.
- ¹² Lonergan, Method 141.
- ¹³ Lonergan, Method 141.
- ¹⁴ Lonergan, Method 142.
- ¹⁵ Lonergan, Method 141.
- ¹⁶ Lonergan, Method 138.
- ¹⁷ Lonergan, Method 163.
- ¹⁸ Lonergan, Method xi.
- ¹⁹ Meynell, "Frye's Idea" 123.
- ²⁰ Hawkins, Classics 130-31.
- ²¹ Wells and Taylor, Textual 1.
- ²² Wells and Taylor, Textual 3-4.
- ²³ Lonergan, Method 155.
- ²⁴ See F.P. Wilson.
- ²⁵ Dryden, "Dramatic" 67.
- ²⁶ See Harris, Ernest Jones.
- ²⁷ Belsey 135.
- ²⁸ Levin, "The Poetics" 502.
- ²⁹ Levin, "The Poetics" 496.
- ³⁰ See Baldwin.
- ³¹ See Muir, Sources; Charles and Michelle Martindale.
- ³² See Hill iii.
- ³³ This is especially common in the Jacobean period. On the uncertain implications of "The Acts of Abuses," see Felperin, Romance 169.
- ³⁴ Noble, Biblical 26.
- ³⁵ See R.M. Frye, Renaissance 14-24.
- ³⁶ See Bale.
- ³⁷ See Noble, Biblical.
- ³⁸ See Jeffrey, Dictionary.
- ³⁹ Schoenbaum, Compact 111.
- ⁴⁰ See McRoberts, Cox, Wickham.
- ⁴¹ See Sugden, Shapiro, Frost.
- ⁴² Bradbrook 4.
- ⁴³ Aristotle, Rhetoric 598.
- ⁴⁴ Aristotle, Poetics 686.
- ⁴⁵ Pope, Preface v.
- ⁴⁶ Bridges 2.
- ⁴⁷ See Harbage, Audience; Hawkins, Classics 130.
- ⁴⁸ See Cook.
- ⁴⁹ See Chambers, Elizabethan; Bentley; Gurr, Stage.

- ⁶⁰ See Gurr, Rebuilding.
- ⁶¹ Jenson, "To The Memory" 66.
- ⁶² Lonergan, Method 155.
- ⁶³ Hawkes 292.
- ⁶⁴ Vickers, Appropriating 1-91.
- ⁶⁵ Vickers Appropriating 181.
- ⁶⁶ Augustine, On Christian 50.
- ⁶⁷ Hawkes 292.
- ⁶⁸ See Abbot.
- ⁶⁹ See Mahood.
- ⁷⁰ See Partridge, Rubenstein, Colman.
- ⁷¹ See Dent.
- ⁷² See Davis, Anne Barton, Names.
- ⁷³ Montrose 16-18.
- ⁷⁴ Lonergan, Method 175.
- ⁷⁵ See Montrose, Greenblatt, Negotiations.
- ⁷⁶ See Andrews.
- ⁷⁷ See Elton.
- ⁷⁸ Pope, Preface vi.
- ⁷⁹ Aristotle, Poetics 681.
- ⁸⁰ Aristotle, Poetics 687.
- ⁸¹ Sidney 174.
- ⁸² Sidney 157.
- ⁸³ Frost 209-245.
- ⁸⁴ Dryden, "Dramatic" 58.
- ⁸⁵ Johnson 67.
- ⁸⁶ Johnson 66.
- ⁸⁷ Coleridge, Lectures 220.
- ⁸⁸ Dowden 403.
- ⁸⁹ Strachey 60.
- ⁹⁰ Knight, "Myth" 29-30.
- ⁹¹ James 210.
- ⁹² Danby 98.
- ⁹³ Edwards, "Romances" 18.
- ⁹⁴ Frye, Natural 8.
- ⁹⁵ Frye, Secular 51.
- ⁹⁶ Sidney, Apology 164.
- ⁹⁷ See Gesner.
- ⁹⁸ Williamson 111.
- ⁹⁹ See Frey, "Teaching"; Neely, Broken.
- ¹⁰⁰ See Bergeron, Royal; Wickham.
- ¹⁰¹ Simonds 31.
- ¹⁰² Dante, "Letter" 103.
- ¹⁰³ Aristotle, Poetics 685.
- ¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, Poetics 684.
- ¹⁰⁵ Aristotle, Poetics 684.
- ¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, Poetics 684.
- ¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, Poetics 687.
- ¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, Poetics 686.
- ¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, Poetics 686.
- ¹¹⁰ Aristotle, Poetics 687.
- ¹¹¹ Aristotle, Poetics 686.

- ¹⁰² Aristotle, Poetics 686.
- ¹⁰³ Aristotle, Poetics 685.
- ¹⁰⁴ Puttenham 64.
- ¹⁰⁵ Schmidt 50.
- ¹⁰⁶ Dryden, "Preface" 222.
- ¹⁰⁷ Johnson 71.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bradley 29-60.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bradley 32.
- ¹¹⁰ Coleridge, Lectures 237.
- ¹¹¹ Bradley 32.
- ¹¹² Bradley 33.
- ¹¹³ Brailey 42-45.
- ¹¹⁴ Bradley 214.
- ¹¹⁵ Bradley 56.
- ¹¹⁶ Doran 6.
- ¹¹⁷ See Hirsh.
- ¹¹⁸ See Hereward Price.
- ¹¹⁹ See Hartwig, Analogical.
- ¹²⁰ Emrys Jones, Scenic.
- ¹²¹ See Dawson.
- ¹²² Bradley 7.
- ¹²³ Bradley 7.
- ¹²⁴ Aristotle, Poetics 684.
- ¹²⁵ Bradley 13.
- ¹²⁶ Pope, Preface iii.
- ¹²⁷ Morgann 149.
- ¹²⁸ Morgann 169.
- ¹²⁹ Johnson 523-24.
- ¹³⁰ Hazlitt, English Poets 51.
- ¹³¹ Hazlitt, Characters 232.
- ¹³² Coleridge, Lectures 125.
- ¹³³ Coleridge, Lectures 132.
- ¹³⁴ Muir, "Twentieth-Century" 24.
- ¹³⁵ Stewart 9-10.
- ¹³⁶ Stoll 403-490.
- ¹³⁷ Spivack 28-59.
- ¹³⁸ See Bilton.
- ¹³⁹ See Clemen, Soliloquies.
- ¹⁴⁰ Schlegel 369.
- ¹⁴¹ Ribner 175-76.
- ¹⁴² See Holland.
- ¹⁴³ Berry, Comedy 18.
- ¹⁴⁴ See Harbage, Audience.
- ¹⁴⁵ Holderness 36.
- ¹⁴⁶ Nuttall, Mimesis viii.
- ¹⁴⁷ Aristotle, Poetics 684.
- ¹⁴⁸ See Spurgeon.
- ¹⁴⁹ See Clemens, Development.
- ¹⁵⁰ OED 3281.
- ¹⁵¹ Levin, New Readings 23.
- ¹⁵² Levin, New Readings 55.
- ¹⁵³ Levin, New Readings 41.

- ¹⁵⁴ Levin, New Readings 13.
- ¹⁵⁵ Levin, New Readings 22.
- ¹⁵⁶ Levin, New Readings 40.
- ¹⁵⁷ Levin, New Readings 77.
- ¹⁵⁸ Levin, New Readings 70.
- ¹⁵⁹ Levin, New Readings 75.
- ¹⁶⁰ Bradley 52.
- ¹⁶¹ See Knights, Themes.
- ¹⁶² Rabkin, Common 24-25.
- ¹⁶³ Else 125-133.
- ¹⁶⁴ See Joseph, Trousdale, Tuve, Vickers Prose; Vickers "Use".
- ¹⁶⁵ See Joseph.
- ¹⁶⁶ Auerbach 124-177; See Matthews.
- ¹⁶⁷ Peacham 25.
- ¹⁶⁸ Rivers 168.
- ¹⁶⁹ Robertson xv.
- ¹⁷⁰ Coghill 30.
- ¹⁷¹ Fergusson 36.
- ¹⁷² Fergusson 35.
- ¹⁷³ See Styán, Revolution.
- ¹⁷⁴ See Babula, Bulman, Rothwell, Trewin, Willis.
- ¹⁷⁵ See Gooch.
- ¹⁷⁶ See Noble, Song; Long, Seng.
- ¹⁷⁷ See Brissenden.
- ¹⁷⁸ See Bergeron, Pageantry.
- ¹⁷⁹ See Kokeritz, Cercignani.
- ¹⁸⁰ See Kokeritz.
- ¹⁸¹ See B. Joseph, Bevington.
- ¹⁸² See Daly, Doebler.
- ¹⁸³ See Styán, Stagecraft; Watkins.
- ¹⁸⁴ See Dessen.
- ¹⁸⁵ See Brockbank, Jackson, Wood.
- ¹⁸⁶ See Berry Directing, John Barton.
- ¹⁸⁷ See McGuire, Thaler.
- ¹⁸⁸ See Howard.
- ¹⁸⁹ Johnson, "To the Memory" 65.
- ¹⁹⁰ Dryden, "Dramatic" 68.
- ¹⁹¹ Dryden, "Dramatic" 67.
- ¹⁹² Pope, "Essay" 279.
- ¹⁹³ Johnson 61.
- ¹⁹⁴ Johnson 62.
- ¹⁹⁵ Johnson 76.
- ¹⁹⁶ Johnson 76.
- ¹⁹⁷ Hawkins, Classics 86.
- ¹⁹⁸ Johnson 71.
- ¹⁹⁹ Sidney 168.
- ²⁰⁰ Johnson 80.
- ²⁰¹ England 7.
- ²⁰² Garrick, qtd. England 38.
- ²⁰³ Hazlitt, English Poets 3.
- ²⁰⁴ Hazlitt, English Poets 4.
- ²⁰⁵ Coleridge, Principles 464.

- ²⁰⁶ Richardson 31.
- ²⁰⁷ Hazlitt, Lectures 47.
- ²⁰⁸ Coleridge, Lectures 251.
- ²⁰⁹ Coleridge, Biographia 325.
- ²¹⁰ Keats 474.
- ²¹¹ Hazlitt, Characters 313.
- ²¹² Coleridge, Biographia 317.
- ²¹³ Coleridge, Lectures 464.
- ²¹⁴ Shelley 503.
- ²¹⁵ Stavisky 54-56.
- ²¹⁶ Gervinus 889.
- ²¹⁷ Dowden 23.
- ²¹⁸ Dowden 27-28.
- ²¹⁹ Shaw, Shaw on 5.
- ²²⁰ Tolstoy 376-77.
- ²²¹ Tolstoy 382.
- ²²² Bradley 216.
- ²²³ Taylor, Reinventing 229.
- ²²⁴ Taylor, Reinventing 229.
- ²²⁵ Bradley 216.
- ²²⁶ Merton, Seven 180.
- ²²⁷ Harbage, Rival 249.
- ²²⁸ See Wimsatt.
- ²²⁹ Hawkins Devil's 22.
- ²³⁰ Walton 156.
- ²³¹ See Dollimore and Sinfield.
- ²³² Marx 145.
- ²³³ Sinfield 178.
- ²³⁴ Holderness x.
- ²³⁵ Coleridge, qtd. Vickers, Appropriating 372. Actually, Coleridge writes that "allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture language...". "Lay Sermons I" 661.
- ²³⁶ Battenhouse 14.
- ²³⁷ See Barthes, Pleasure.
- ²³⁸ Felperin Uses, x.
- ²³⁹ Veenser xiii.
- ²⁴⁰ Greenblatt, "Invisible" 38.
- ²⁴¹ See Kolin.
- ²⁴² Greene 30.
- ²⁴³ Jameson 26.
- ²⁴⁴ Boose 735.
- ²⁴⁵ Sinead Cusack, qtd. Rutter xxv.
- ²⁴⁶ Vickers, Appropriating 417.
- ²⁴⁷ Vickers, Appropriating 430.
- ²⁴⁸ See Krieger.
- ²⁴⁹ Hubler 299.
- ²⁵⁰ Hawkins, Devil's 53.
- ²⁵¹ Borges, Tlön, qtd. Hawkins, Devil's 61.
- ²⁵² Hawkins, Devil's 82.
- ²⁵³ Hawkins, Devil's 63.
- ²⁵⁴ Hawkins, Devil's 6.
- ²⁵⁵ Hawkins, Devil's 83.
- ²⁵⁶ Hawkins, Devil's 83.

²⁵⁷ Traversi 257.

²⁵⁸ Lonergan, Method xi.

“To Make Men Glorious”:

The “Purchase” of Pericles: Prince of Tyre

Of the four romances, none has been estimated as having such widely varying value as Pericles, Prince of Tyre. A watchword for Jacobean stage success after being printed in six quartos between 1609 and 1635,¹ and the first Shakespearean play staged after the Restoration,² Pericles has also been lavishly praised in the early twentieth-century by T.S. Eliot, who called it “that very great play.”³ As well, several stage productions have reestablished the play’s theatrical reputation at the end of this century. That reputation had been very low since the eighteenth-century, however, partly because Pericles’ first 1609 quarto is corrupt, but mainly because the play did not appear in a Shakespeare folio until the second printing of the Third Folio, and even then beside a number of plays spuriously attributed to Shakespeare.⁴ This publication history led many early editors and critics to argue that Shakespeare had not written the play, even though his name appears on each of the first six quartos, and caused later editors to argue that Shakespeare completed the last three acts of a play begun by Day, Wilkins, or Heywood,⁵ an argument which modern stylometric analysis has sometimes supported.⁶ The authorship issue has received more critical discussion than any other, and some believe that “without Shakespeare’s name the play would attract next to no one.”⁷ Yet it is doubtful not only whether the issue can be definitively resolved, but also whether its resolution would be determinative of the play’s value; whoever wrote it, Pericles can only be performed as we now have it. Further, however much of the play Shakespeare wrote, few dispute that he completed at least its last three acts, and though it may be useful to consider potential collaborative authors in order to consider Pericles’ unusually high number of textual options,⁸ enough characteristic traits of the first two acts carry over into the final three that it is reasonable to discuss most of the potential author-audience mediated meanings—such as the use of sources and intercanonical or extratextual allusion—as though the author in question is Shakespeare. As Knight puts it:

Whatever we think of certain parts, the whole, as we have it, is unquestionably dominated by a single mind; that mind is very clearly Shakespeare’s; and Shakespeare’s, too, in process of an advance unique in literature.⁹

Doubt about the play's authorship did lead many of the great neoclassical or Romantic critics hardly to consider the nature of this advance, but Knight and others begin their more sympathetic twentieth-century evaluation of Pericles by valuing the play as the signal turn which led to the later, greater romances that close Shakespeare's career. Biographical critics note that the plague years of 1608-09 separate Shakespeare's tragedies from the romances and postulate that, after being unable to complete the dark, melancholy play Timon of Athens, and after the tragic close of King Lear, Shakespeare wrote Pericles seeking to recover the peace of a 'harmonious vision of life; thus, he portrays a reunion of lost daughter and depressed father which did end happily.¹⁰ Some critics harshly regard this turn as a Nahum Tate-like retreat from existential reality;¹¹ others understand it as a deliberate choice for another genre, romance,¹² and value Pericles for the very naiveté and simplicity with which Shakespeare accepted the conventions of romance. Frye, for example, who regards generic choice as a preference for one archetypal myth over another, admires Pericles as "a deliberate experiment in presenting a traditional archetypal sequence as nakedly and baldly as possible."¹³

Other twentieth-century scholars sought a fuller historical understanding of romance than Frye, and focused on two primary aspects of Pericles' meaning: the play's connections to medieval literature, and the performance techniques by which Shakespeare successfully made this "old song" hold the Renaissance stage. Responding to the commonplace neoclassical critique of Pericles' episodic plot, many critics argue that the play's self-consciously archaic, medieval atmosphere shifts interest away from the suspenseful plot and psychological realism of the tragedies, and towards the allegorical, often religiously and ethically didactic themes characteristic of medieval drama and romance. Such critics emphasize that the play's primary source is Book 8 of John Gower's Confessio Amantis, a retelling of the ancient romantic legend of Apollonius of Tyre; Shakespeare brings Gower's fourteenth-century medieval poetic persona directly to Pericles by casting him as its choric presenter. Lawrence Twine's 1576 prose version of the Apollonius legend, The Patterne of Painful Adventures, is another definite source,¹⁴ while the general influence of Sidney's Arcadia is also acknowledged.¹⁵ For thematic interpreters, it is the mediations of meaning characteristic of medieval drama which are most prominent, leading many of them to call Pericles a "mystery" or a "miracle" play.¹⁶ Other themes have also been explored, such as the topical political significance of Pericles as Prince and Helicanus as counsellor,¹⁷ and the issues of

sexuality, gender, and familial relations raised by the parallel but contrasting images of father / daughter relations shown in the incestuous Antiochus and his daughter and the love between Pericles and his daughter Marina.¹⁸ The second most common approach to Pericles, though, is performance criticism. Citing the initial stage popularity of the play, and the success of recent stage productions, performance criticism has found the play's spectacles--such as its dumb shows, medieval tournament, storm scenes, harmonious music, and above all recognition scenes--to be a vibrant ground for showing that performance is vital to dramatic meaning.

The work of these interpretative critics is an essential prerequisite to any evaluation of the play, especially since it demonstrates that Pericles fulfils the second purpose that Gower's opening speech gives for his coming to the Renaissance stage. After first saying that he has come "To sing a song that old was sung," he adds that he is "Assuming man's infirmities / To glad your ears and please your eyes" (1.0.1-4). The first half of this second statement of intention can be read as a typically medieval promise to use art to teach ethical happiness,¹⁹ the second a standard Shakespearean promise to give his audience theatrical pleasure. Much Pericles criticism demonstrates how the play mediates at least one half of Gower's second statement of intention, yet sometimes the intimate connection between the parts is severed by critical interpretation. In a balanced Lonerganian approach, then, a first step towards properly valuing the play is to describe how its pleasing spectacle supports and interacts with its medieval ethics. In the second, perhaps more urgent step, this ethical instruction must itself be evaluated. This task is rather difficult because, in contrast to the dialectical criticism admired by Rabkin or Hawkins, Pericles criticism has not generated vigorous debate. There are infamous devaluations of the play's medieval features, such as Jonson's perhaps jealous remark that Pericles' popularity derived from its being a "mouldy tale" (New Inn, Epilogue 21-22), or Strachey's description of the play as "a miserable archaic fragment,"²⁰ but few critics who sympathetically explicate the play's medieval meanings reflect on the value of those meanings.

To do so, it must first be noticed that Pericles, like most medieval didactic art, contains within itself many intimations of its own value. Gower's opening speech provides this play's third, most explicit statement of purpose when he says of the old song:

It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy-ales;

And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.

The purchase is to make men glorious.... (1.0.5-9)

Felperin has pointed out that the “festivals” referred to “are all occasions in the Church calendar,” and further sees a Christian intention by arguing that Gower presents what follows as “a timeless parable for our spiritual recreation (in both senses of the word)”; ²¹ others, aware of the commonplace Renaissance metaphor of Christ as physician (cf. R2 1.1.153-54), have also taken “read it for restoratives” as an imperative to use the play for spiritual health, and have continued the wordplay on “re” by noting that in recreating Gower, Shakespeare has provided in Pericles the first of many exempla of the ultimate purpose of such health, namely, resurrection.

Few critics comment, though, on the final, most explicitly evaluative line of the passage, which tells us that the “purchase” or profit²² of the play is “to make men glorious” (1.0.9). This, too, is likely a statement of Christian purpose. St. Paul describes the stages of salvation in which, finally, those God “justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8: 30); as the final stage, to be made glorious is synonymous with resurrection. Arden editor F.D. Hoeniger did argue that “this line also describes adequately the basic aim of the Legends of the Saints and of the miracle plays derived from them,”²³ but subsequent critical neglect probably stems from confusion over the meaning of the word “glorious.” Even the Oxford English Dictionary gives only meanings such as “boastful” or “eager for glory,” and ironically quotes Gower’s line as an example of the latter definition.²⁴ The OED does, however, provide the Christian meaning of the substantive noun “glory,” which is “the honour of God, considered as the final cause of creation, and as the highest moral aim of intelligent creatures” or, more simply, “the splendour and bliss of heaven.”²⁵ Quite probably, Gower’s “glorious” is an adjectival form of the substantive state to which Christians believe themselves bound. The secular meaning of “glorious” also occurs in Pericles, but usually suggests ironic dramatic misvaluing, as when Pericles echoes Gower in telling how he “sought the purchase of a glorious beauty” in wooing Antiochus’ daughter (1.2.72), or when Gower tells how the people of Tharsus--whose Cleon and Dionysa will prove to be cruel traitors--build Pericles a “statue to make him glorious” (2.2.14). Typically, “tidings to the contrary” (2.2.15) swiftly follow such scenes, so that soon we again see Pericles ingloriously naked and shipwrecked. These ironies are part of what Knight sees as “the most insistent impressionistic recurrence” in the

play: "the balancing of true and false values."²⁶ Often Gower or other moralizing characters in the play help the audience discern the true values portrayed within the play, but often, too, these values must be considered within the broadest horizons of value if we are to value correctly the play as a whole.

Contrary, then, to those who argue that since Pericles is as an "old tale" it therefore asks to be disbelieved,²⁷ closer study of Gower shows him to be a moral guide²⁸ who calls for a full engagement of our aesthetic, moral, and religious horizons. Gower thus closes his opening speech by saying, though in the word order typical of Shakespeare's late style, "I give my cause"--that is, I offer my "purpose" or "legal" case"²⁹ --"to the judgment of your eye... who best can justify" (1.0.41-42). Again, what sounds like a typical call for the audience to participate in the performance aesthetically also calls for an individual spectator's moral response, in the sense that the word "justify" here could be understood according to the commonplace New Testament legal metaphor that means, approximately, "to declare free from the penalty of sin,"³⁰ as when St. Paul says that whom God "called, them also he justified" (Rom. 8:30).

Yet while Gower's opening speech does suggest Christianity as an important horizon of value, these Christian purposes do not exhaust Pericles' achievements. However analogous Pericles' characters are to those of miracle or morality plays, they are fictional representations of human beings, not historical portrayals of saints or biblical figures. Moreover, the classical gods appear in the play, not the Christian God. Still, given the potential censorship of the the Act of Abuses and the commonplace Renaissance baptism of the pagan gods, Pericles' Christian connotations are remarkably bold. Some balanced view must be sought, such as Felperin's claim that Pericles' "pagan deities" have "Christian-providential associations"; thus, Shakespeare has "the best of both worlds: timeless romantic action with unmistakably Christian relevance."³¹ In summary, then, to appreciate this action and realize its relevance, the events, characters, themes, language and song of Pericles should be understood and evaluated not only for their moral, medieval Christian truth, but also for the theatrical pleasure which this spectacular play has brought to a variety of human audiences.

The wide range of that variety should be noticed first of all in Gower. Though his role as a moral interpreter is analogous to the *Poeta* of a saint's play like the late fifteenth-century conversion of St. Paul,³² and though we have an idea from the woodcut on Wilkins' Painfull

Adventures that he probably first appeared “old, with a dark and greying beard ... stout and rather short, dressed in a long plain coat, an old-fashioned cap,” his “heavily moral and stiff” appearance is lightened by “his songlike rhythm and air of telling a story.”³³ Whereas it was once feared that onstage Gower would “embarrass with his quaintness,” in recent years it has been shown that he “dazzles with his theatrical *savoir faire*.”³⁴ Actors portraying Gower have included a Caribbean calypso poet,³⁵ a Welsh poet whose elaborate medieval garb contrasted with the near nudity of the other performers,³⁶ a black American street performer using jive cadences,³⁷ and a cabaret MC.³⁸ The Caribbean Gower was especially enchanting, as the set of Tony Richardson’s 1958 production presented him speaking to a group of sailors rowing at sea, turning the play into “a nautical yarn told by an old spinner of tales to an enthralled audience.”³⁹ Such a setting especially supports the appeals Gower makes to the audience, as when he says of Pericles, “think his pilot thought; / So with his steerage shall your thoughts grow on” (4.4.18-19), or when he humbly says to the audience “never could I so convey, / Unless your thoughts went on my way” (4.0.49-50). Like the Henry V chorus,⁴⁰ who asks the audience to “Grapple your minds to sternage of this navy” (3.18), and to “eke out our performance with your mind” (3.0.35), Gower solicits the audience’s participation in order to increase the value of the theatrical experience.⁴¹

Other critics, however, argue that the artifice of using Gower as chorus reminds the audience of “the remoteness of the story from actual life,” and gives the play a “static, disconnected effect” which asks us to see scenes as “individual pictures” and gives the effect of “reading through an emblem book.”⁴² Further enhancing Pericles’ moral and visual impact is another Renaissance art form, the dumb show.⁴³ In Hamlet, this theatrical device is used for moral illustration, but Shakespeare employs it in Pericles not only because it can dramatically enact allegory, but also because it helps to make Gower’s medieval poem dramatic. Always occurring at the crucial moments “when Pericles’ course is again directed to the sea,” the dumb shows “link the large segments of dramatized action” and give “a visual symmetry that makes the play’s parts seem more coherent.”⁴⁴ Gower aids the dumb shows by always linking their actions to the words, telling us, “Like motes and shadows see them move awhile; / Your ears unto your eyes I’ll reconcile” (4.4.21-22). By doing so, Gower continues the tradition of the Renaissance theatre’s “authorial presenter” who, beyond the role of a chorus, brings “through his character as an author,

a special perspective on the play proper.”⁴⁶ Gower is the only such authorial presenter in Shakespeare’s plays. To appreciate the value of his unique perspective, one must both understand his character as a medieval author and realize the appeal of that character to Shakespeare’s purposes in Pericles.

That medieval identity cannot be obscured, no matter who plays Gower, because of his many middle English words, such as “yslacked” or “eyne” (3.0.1, 5), and his simple tetrameter rhyming couplets. That meter was once a prime motive for assigning Acts 1-2 to another author, but changes in the later speeches are merely “small adjustments in his characteristic manner of speech.”⁴⁸ The verse of the first two acts does “work much better in the theatre than critical-minded readers of the text have assumed,” perhaps because “after Gower’s introduction of his ancient story in quaint archaic rhymes, the audience does not expect the characters who enter to speak like those in Antony and Cleopatra or Twelfth Night.”⁴⁷ By presenting an obviously archaic figure and deliberately simplifying and popularizing his art, Shakespeare in Pericles may be like Chaucer writing the jangling “Tale of Sir Thopas,” winking at his audience in some of the play’s most absurdly devised episodes.”⁴⁸ Gower’s archaic moralizing also, however, returns both Shakespeare and his audience to the saint’s plays they saw in their youth, and thus asks any audience to “unlearn [its] sophisticated notions of dramatic story telling,”⁴⁹ and to replace them with characteristically medieval assumptions about the *ethos* of a poet and the ethical effects of art.⁵⁰

Gower’s opening words, “To sing a song that old was sung, / From ashes ancient Gower is come” (1.0.1-2), liken him to the Anglo-Saxon scop who wrote alliterative poetry to be sung round the fire, and begin an emphasis on the authority of antiquity, the play being an “old song” sung by “old Gower,” as he usually calls himself (2.0.40). This authority derives fundamentally from the medieval Christian belief that creation is gradually deteriorating after its initial goodness; thus Gower’s promise of glory is followed by the words, “*Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius*” (1.0. 10): “the older a thing is the better it is.” Here Gower speaks the medieval Christian language of tradition, Latin, and uses the rhetorical means so valued by the Middle Ages for its ability to preserve the wisdom of the past, *paroemia* or the proverb.⁵¹ Fundamental to retrieving this wisdom is humility before tradition, as opposed to expressions of individualistic genius; but, speaking as an actor from centre stage might undermine the *auctoritas* sought by a medieval

author.⁵² Gower's anachronistic appearance is thus described in mystical, religious terms as "Assuming man's infirmities" (1.0.3), and he always emphasizes--as did Gower in the Confessio--that his song is not original: "I tell you what mine authors say" (1.0.20). Often, Gower further evokes humility by speaking in the third person, though first person is also used (in the self-deprecating manner made famous by Chaucer) when the dumb-shows interrupt Gower and he queries, "What need speak I" (2.0.16). Even when Gower promises to expand what the dumb-shows have shown, saying, "What's dumb in show I'll plain with speech" (3.0.14), the double sense of "plain" as "to explain" and "to plainly say,"⁵³ recalls the attitude towards rhetoric of the medieval Gower who, at the end of the Confessio, claims to have spoken with "rude wordis and with pleyne" (8.3122), and not to have used the "scole of eloquence" or the "forme of rhetorique" of which "Tullius som tyme wrot" (8.3115-19). Similarly, Shakespeare's Gower humbly offers the old forms of plain words and simple meter to the Jacobean audience, using a metaphor of self-abnegation, the dripping of a candle, which vividly suggests that the real life of pleasure is the light of past wisdom:

If you, born in those latter times,
When wit's more ripe, accept my rimes,
And that to hear an old man sing
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might
Waste it for you like taper-light. (1.0.11-16)

Shakespeare's poet is, then, very much the "Moral Gower" famously described by Chaucer (Tr. 5. 1856). It is an error to interpret Gower's humility before his sources--as when he stops speaking because "this long's the text" (2.0.40)--as a claim that "the spectacle will be worth watching whatever the limitations of the text," a naive attitude "not anticipated" by a sophisticated chorus such as in Henry V.⁵⁴ The medieval humility before the text is strongly anticipated, however, by the Henry V chorus' serious, though inevitably ironic, closing description of a humble, hardworking Shakespeare: "with rough and all-unable pen / Our bending author hath pursued the story" (Epilogue, 1-2). This same humility is as important to the choruses of the last three acts of Pericles as to the first two--Gower closes "on your patience evermore attending" (5.3. 101). The value Shakespeare, and we, might attach to such an attitude is strongly suggested by

Shakespeare's most self-revelatory work, his Sonnets, particularly Sonnet 76. It echoes Gower's thoughts on rhyme, as Shakespeare forsakes "variation or quick change," "new-found methods" or "compounds strange," and in rhetoric and the use of sources, he will "keep invention in a noted weed" (2-6). Then, in the sonnet's closing sestet, Shakespeare claims for his central theme the same as that of the Confessio Amantis--love--and, Gower-like, humbly admits that his poetry can speak of love in a vital, light-giving way only by a self-effacing use of traditional sources:

O, know, sweet love, I always write of you,
 And you and love are still my argument;
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending again what is already spent:
 For as the sun is daily new and old,
 So is my love still telling what is told. (9-14)

In Pericles the arrangement of the dramatic "argument" is incoherent when judged as realistic narrative, and is relatively artless in comparison to other Shakespearean plots,⁵⁵ but is an intelligible series of antithetical exempla when accepted as didactic medieval art. In writing Pericles, Shakespeare showed "an unusual loyalty to the plot of his source."⁵⁶ To properly value this play, even while remaining aware of its performance qualities, we, too, must show an unusual reverence for the way meaning was mediated by medieval literature in general and the old rhymes of the Confessio in particular, as well as an openness to the *mimesis* of spiritual reality which caused Shakespeare and his audience to value so highly the obviously fictional tales of medieval romance.⁵⁷

To do so, the next step is to understand the character and life of Prince Pericles himself, known as Apollonius in the Confessio. Surely Pericles cannot be understood, as Richard Levin presumably would wish, as a realistic human character; but neither should we therefore move to the opposite extreme and describe him as an allegorical figure, "a kind of Everyman."⁵⁸ Such a move might lead modern readers unfamiliar with the variety of allegory to Muir's view that Pericles' characters are "no longer interesting in themselves," but simply "symbolic puppets,"⁵⁹ or at least lead them to accept an interpretive dichotomy in which, rather than "presenting believable characters," in Pericles Shakespeare is said to have "developed abstract ideas."⁶⁰ Pericles does develop some themes so clearly that an abstract idea is emphasized, and the play's moralizing

characters often use “gnomic verse” to express these ideas.⁶¹ Yet, there are two key reasons to reject the notion of Pericles as an idea rather than a person. First, many of his adventures, and particularly his theatrically moving reunions with Thaisa and Marina, stress the trials and triumphs of a flesh and blood human being. A second, not unrelated, reason is that unlike an abstract idea, Pericles undergoes spiritual growth. Such growth is exactly what is denied by allegorical readings which claim that Pericles “is not lusty or culpable but eminently virtuous,”⁶² and which view the entire cast as divided “right down the middle into sheep and goats, the good and the wicked, after the fashion of earlier religious drama.”⁶³ Though finally the characters can be thus divided, as on Judgement day, doing so immediately can lead to a distinctly nonreligious judgement: in contrast to the other romances’ “meaningful pattern of sin, repentance, and forgiveness,” Pericles might be seen as a “disordered series of thrilling adventures.”⁶⁴ Rather, when Pericles is understood as embodying virtuous ideas and both corporeal and spiritual struggle, like the saints of the miracle plays and very much in the Renaissance tradition of literal allegory or typology, then numerous meaningful patterns can be seen in his unique story.

In Pericles’ initial picture, Antiochus’ incestuous court and its eerie row of “grim looks” emblemize a place of extreme evil and death,⁶⁵ and provide the initial stage in the pattern of Pericles’ allegorical adventures. Here Pericles certainly seems virtuous enough, and it is understandable that critics regard his troubles as a fall “only from innocence into knowledge” of the world’s evil.⁶⁶ Yet there seems little doubt that Pericles’ primary attraction is to the outward beauty of Antiochus’ daughter, and is the “result more of fascination, almost lust, than love.”⁶⁷ This is strongly suggested in the Confessio, whose Apollonius “hath to love a gret desir” and is of “hote blod” (8. 376-78), and by Pericles himself when he says that the gods “have inflam’d desire in my breast” (1.1.21). Such desires might seem innocuous for a strapping young prince, but the opening scene strongly emphasizes the theme of deceptive appearances, and the consequent need to discern true from false values. Despite Antiochus’ earthly greatness and his daughter’s beauty, she is like “a glorious casket stor’d with ill” (1.1.77), and thus, like Lear (4.6.164-65), Pericles painfully learns that even with kings,

How courtesy would seem to cover sin,
When what is done is like an hypocrite,
The which is good in nothing but in sight! (1.1.121-23)

Pericles is wise to solve the riddle, but this success, too, means only failure. Frye is right to note that "If Pericles fails to solve the riddle, he must die; if he succeeds in solving it, he must die."⁶⁸

Frye is wrong, however, to argue that this "Arabian nights" logic "cannot be lifelike,"⁶⁹ for surely two of the most common and now also clichéd realities of human life are the ability of appearances to deceive and the propensity of humans to put themselves in "Catch-22" situations. Of course these themes are very common in Shakespeare, but perhaps they are emphasized here because Pericles is the opposite of Timon, who "is taken in by appearances."⁷⁰ Timon's confusion leads to the disdain of all humanity, but through enduring love Pericles becomes Shakespeare's "pattern of constancy."⁷¹ The importance of such constancy is also stressed in the Confessio, throughout the other romances, and, perhaps most beautifully and appropriately for Pericles, by Sonnet 116, which tells us that love "is the star to every wandering bark, / Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken" (7-8).

Frye similarly underestimates the significance of the incest motif, which he notes is found in many romances, but which he says shows "nothing about the relation of fiction to reality: what it shows us is that some conventions of storytelling are more obsessive than others."⁷² Feminist critics, however, have seen the relationship of Antiochus and his daughter as "an emblem of extreme and interconnected perversions of patriarchal control,"⁷³ and have noted that incest is a common evil of human life. Antiochus is an exemplum of a murderous pedophile and, as in Lear and in Sonnet 129's description of lust as "murd'rous, bloody, full of blame" (3), Shakespeare here illustrates the close link between lust and violence, leading Pericles to see that "Murther's as near to lust as flame to smoke's" (1.1.138). Other critics have developed another comment by Frye, that "father-daughter incest keeps hanging over the story as a possibility until nearly the end,"⁷⁴ into the notion that the brothel is an image of Pericles' repressed sexuality, which he must fight against upon meeting Marina in Myteline.⁷⁵ However, this psychological speculation can no more be supported by Shakespeare's text than can the notion of Hamlet's Freudian attraction to Gertrude. Anyone familiar with the stories of incest survivors will reject as unrealistic the blame which Pericles assigns to Antiochus' daughter, whom Gower calls "Bad child" (1.0.23). While Antiochus is called "worse father" and the one who did "entice his own" (1.0.23), the riddle also "emphasizes the daughter's seductiveness and complicity."⁷⁶ Of course, the nameless princess

presumably did not write the riddle, but still Pericles cannot be cited as a valuable text by which to understand the consciousness of an incest victim, or the conscience of an abusive father. Rather, in addition to the elements of realism in their stories, Pericles and Marina, and the “good king” Simonides (2.1.100) and Thaisa, are foils to Antiochus and his daughter. They thus demonstrate how, as in medieval drama, in Pericles “elaborate moral patterns of contrast and similarity” are set up between characters.⁷⁷ Attributing groundless sexual motives to Pericles’ love of Marina, however, simply detracts from the exemplum of the chastity, a virtue shown by both throughout the play. A final contrast to the glory they ultimately share is vividly pictured by Antiochus’ final end:

Even in the height and pride of all his glory,
When he was seated in a chariot
Of an inestimable value, and his daughter with him,
A fire from heaven came and shrivell'd up
Those bodies, even to loathing; (2.4.6-10)

Editors of Pericles’ corrupt text note that the meter of line 8 here is “hard to justify,”⁷⁸ but the irony of Antiochus’ “inestimable value” is a fine addition to the passage’s other ironic discrepancies, the “glory” of earthly power and the contrast between the royals’ outward appearance and their inward stench. Some readers might find this picture unrealistic, the work of a *deus ex machina* making an unusually early entrance to hold together an especially improbable plot. Yet, from the standpoint of any theism which condemns sexual abuse, Antiochus’ end follows, at some point, as simply and surely as St. Paul’s promise that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6: 23), a line probably alluded to when we are told that Antiochus’ “greatness was no guard / To bar heaven’s shaft, but sin had his reward” (2.4.14-15).

In facing the temptations of lust and the deception of appearances, Pericles begins to learn what Genius teaches Amans, Gower’s poetic persona of the lover in the Confessio: the key to Amans’ own well-being and that of those he loves is “the distinction between vain and selfish *amor*, bound up with self-delusion, and the *caritas* through which the sufferer finally becomes reconciled to himself and reintegrated into the human community.”⁷⁹ This essentially Augustinian pilgrimage in Pericles has also been described as a journey through three stages of vision--corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual--in which at each stage Pericles must face a darkness close to

death.⁸⁰ Pericles' voyages have also been seen in a more popularly medieval manner, as "a symbolic pilgrimage in search of an ideal ... of devotion to chivalrous love,"⁸¹ and as analogous to those of a classical epic hero such as Ulysses.⁸² Still other Christian readings note that after the "eye-opening discovery of human depravity" at Antiochus' court and later disasters at sea, Pericles' voyages are analogous to those of Noah and Jonah, and thus suggest "mankind's pilgrimaging towards salvation."⁸³ These analogues have striking differences as well as similarities, yet all suggest a heroic endurance which should serve to counter the view that Pericles is "a passive figure, quite unlike Shakespeare's usual dynamic protagonists," who "himself does nothing crucial."⁸⁴ In this view, the play is "a parable of human fortune."⁸⁵ Indeed, Pericles does at first seem to be a pawn of fortune. By play's end, however, the audience may be certain that, as in "the doctrine of Boethius," here "Fortune serves the providential order of an omniscient God."⁸⁶

An approach thus based on Boethian allegory can be textually supported, but it must not simplify the play's events, which show Pericles erring variously, acting virtuously, and both prospering and suffering throughout the play. An alternate approach to understanding these events is suggested by the *Confessio*, whose *prologus* presents its value as a recording of virtue so as "to magnifie / The worthi princes that tho were" (44-45). Political virtues are thus suggested, but as is characteristic of a medieval text, both the *Confessio* and *Pericles* explicitly connect politics with theology, and particularly the Christian theological virtues of charity, hope, and faith. Considering Pericles' character according to these virtues, within the context of the play's events and other supporting themes, may then illuminate the larger issue of fortune against providence that is raised throughout the play.

Political and theological virtues mix most noticeably in "princely charity" (1.2.100), which Pericles can first be seen to practice when he leaves Helicanus in charge of Tyre. This departure has been condemned as "*hubris* and the breach of degree,"⁸⁷ sins which Pericles is said to repeat when he later "leaves Marina to the care of Cleon and Dionyza."⁸⁸ Yet, in both cases Pericles is protecting those he loves from great danger, first from a tyrant, then from the sea which has already taken his wife. Helicanus, a character barely mentioned in the *Confessio* (8. 575), is among the "sheep" finally praised in *Pericles*, and it is he who advises Pericles to "travel for a while" (1.2.106). When Pericles does so, his first act is again one of charity, bringing food to

plague ridden Tharsus, a once mighty state now made “to realize its ultimate dependence”⁸⁸ as part of the play’s emphasis on the fall of earthly power.

Upon traveling Pericles soon has his own troubles, ending up naked and shipwrecked on the shores of Pentapolis, but his reaction--often cited as evidence of passivity--again reflects the counsel of Helicanus, who taught him not to value flattery (1.2.39) (the form of *hubris* that proved so fatal to Lear), but rather, “To bear with patience / Such griefs as you yourself do lay upon yourself” (1.2.65-66). Critics who think Pericles entirely innocent must reject these words as false, but Pericles himself immediately acknowledges the extreme physical attraction that led him to “the face of death” (1.2.71), and a similarly humble acknowledgment comes upon being shipwrecked. Like Lear who, storming on the heath, screams “Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!” and calls the elements “servile ministers” (*Lr.* 3.2.1, 21), Pericles also begins with a seemingly angry command, “Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!”; but then, in contrast to Lear, he calmly continues,

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. (2.1.1-4)

Such a response perhaps makes for less exciting drama than the passion of Lear iconoclastically smashing “the great image of authority” (4.5.154), but Pericles here addresses the same question which so haunts *King Lear*, the nature of humanity, and answers in the one way that brings Lear some peace: men are “poor, naked wretches” (*Lr.* 3.4.28) who must patiently bear sorrows while helping others do the same. Pericles further learns this hard truth, under even more difficult circumstances, when his new wife dies while giving birth during a sea storm. Lychorida the nurse twice tells him, “Patience, good sir” (3.1.19-26), and shows her understanding of Shakespeare’s answer to Lear’s question by telling Pericles to “Be manly” and “take comfort” (3.1.22) in the naked, frail baby still left alive. Pericles becomes a Christian type of patience,⁹⁰ and to see the effect of this virtue on his life, Battenhouse points us to a biblical proverb which, though not directly cited in *Pericles*, powerfully illuminates much of the play: “Tribulation bringeth forth patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).⁹¹

The remaining theological virtue, faith, is first shown to Pericles more through humanity than God, though again in a way which illustrates the Pauline teaching that faith is “the evidence of

things which are not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Pericles is rescued, after being shipwrecked, by simple fishermen who draw up his armor and tell him of the "good" Simonides (2.1.100, 115). Yet they are not naive, but rather they "see how this world goes" (*Lr.* 4.6.147-48) well enough to know that the fish live in the seas "as men do a-land; the great ones eat / up the little ones" (2.1.28-29). As well, the rusty armour they return to Pericles--once a shiny heirloom from his father (2.1.124)--becomes at the tournament for Thaisa's hand in marriage yet another example of deceptive appearances.⁹² Pericles' outer poverty is made even more visually apparent when he has no shield on which to display his heraldic "device" (2.2.19), which is a "withered branch, that's only green at top" (2.2.43), and which has the motto "*In hac spe vivo*" (2.2.43-44). Perhaps already encouraging their relationship, Simonides translates "in this hope I live" as "He hopes by you his fortunes may flourish" (2.2.47), and it is he who provides the gnomic wisdom just preceding the tournament: "Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan / The outward habit by the inward man" (2.2.56-57). It should thus come as no surprise when we are told by a stage direction that the winner is identified in a manner both emblematic of his faith and indicative of his shoddy outward appearance: "Great shouts within, and all cry, 'The mean knight!'" (2.2.60-61).

These scenes can be spectacular in performance, and several aural and visual elements give the feel of the end of a comedy. Music, normally symbolic of harmony, is so prevalent that *Pericles* has been called "a piece of music,"⁹³ and even "one of the world's first operas."⁹⁴ Much of this music is provided by Pericles himself, or at least we can infer this when Simonides commends him for his "sweet music this last night" and calls him "music's master" (2.5.26, 30). In the 1609 quarto and in most modern editions we do not see Pericles playing the harp, as Apollonius does at the same point in the *Confessio* (8.779), but, as Arden editor F.D. Hoeniger asks, "Does it not seem probable that the original presented Pericles at least once with a musical instrument in hand, playing an Elizabethan air?"⁹⁵ Gary Taylor's Oxford edition hence "restores" what is surely a valuable performance scene by having stage directions indicate that a "stringed instrument" be brought, which Pericles "plays and sings" (8a. 8,10). *Pericles* thus provides a "union of the three major arts, *melos*, *lexis*, and *opsis*"⁹⁶ --music, word, and sight--and Shakespeare movingly adapts the *Confessio* to the stage by having Thaisa kneel before her father and, remembering the letter expressing her wish to marry, which both she and Apollonius' future wife wrote (8. 894-903), now speak as an actor: "What with my pen I have in secret written / With my tongue now I openly

confirm" (9. 84-85).⁹⁷ This supplication reflects the patriarchal father / daughter relations typical of the Renaissance and commonplace in Shakespeare's plays,⁹⁸ but onstage Simonides charmingly--and in just three scenes--anticipates Prospero's role as the father who seems to block romance while actually promoting it. By suddenly reversing from, "I'll thus your hopes destroy, / And for further grief" to "God give you joy!" (2.5.86-87), Simonides sums up the sudden new hope for earthly happiness that Pericles finds in marriage. In sharp contrast to Antiochus' daughter, Thaisa is a gift which Pericles never expects, and by marrying her he is united by love to a community which values him for his real, inward character.

Simonides' wish for the couple also suggests a strong religious, Christian dimension to the emblems of hope associated with Pericles. The iconography of the branch has been traced to one of George Wither's emblems, where it signifies Aaron's rod, a type of the Cross of Christ and therefore the ultimate symbol of Christian hope.⁹⁹ Yet in the context of Pericles, where Thaisa will soon be lost, how can the device retain this meaning? Battenhouse answers that "the theological paradigm" here is

the Bible's story of how Abraham's faith achieved but then lost its earthly fortune, yet his heirs of hope fulfilled through a child the family's destiny of a Blessing for everyone. Christian hope is associated with the child of promise given to Abraham in old age; and with the Messiah-child proclaimed by Isaiah as the bringer of 'comfort' to faithful exiles; and with the child in whom old Simeon of Luke 2 found the "consolation" that permitted him to depart in peace having seen salvation.¹⁰⁰

In Pericles, hope is ultimately to be associated with the lost child Marina, though the very opposite of this appears true after Pericles is told that she has died at Mytilene. Then, like other Renaissance heroes such as Red Cross Knight, Faustus, Hamlet, Lear, and Timon, Pericles falls into a depressed melancholy (to which he had earlier seemed susceptible at 1.2.2-5) in which all hope seems lost. At this point Knight speaks of Pericles as passively putting on "sack-cloth and unshaven hair" in "a repentance for no guilt of his own but rather for the fact of mortality in a harsh universe."¹⁰¹ Despite his physical appearance, Pericles now becomes a type not of the patient Job, but rather the angry, despairing Job whose eye of faith can only be reopened by a vision of God's majestic power working in the universe (Job 40-42).

After Pericles has seen Marina's grave, Gower tells us to "Let Pericles believe his

daughter's dead," and "his courses to be ordered / By Lady Fortune" (4.4.46-48). Even before this both Gower (2.0.37) and Pericles himself (2.1.121) have also attributed both his losses and triumphs to Fortune. Modern readers might think such references equivalent to trivial references to chance or luck, but from the point of view of Boethian theology, which so influenced both medieval and Renaissance literature, and which has been found throughout both the Confessio and Pericles,¹⁰² the work of Dame Fortune should be seen as an illusory prelude to Lady Philosophy's comforting vision of how God's providence is truly working to shape human life. Is this why Gower implies that the audience can have a vision superior to Pericles' of the outcome of the play? As already noted, Knight does not clearly distinguish fortune from providence, but other critics think that Pericles gives the audience foreknowledge of events specifically to illustrate the difference between the illusory phenomenal world and transcendent reality, a difference which depends on the operations of providence.¹⁰³ Gower, we might even say, "could serve a Jacobean audience appropriately as instructor on Boethian concepts of providence."¹⁰⁴ Yet if Providence is finally in control, then does Divinity, rather than fortune, deserve both the credit and blame for Pericles' trials? By the same logic, however, does Pericles then become a passive instrument of providence?

The first response to this question has already been given by the indirect evidence that Pericles is at least partially responsible for some of his troubles, and by the clear presentation of other humans, such as Antiochus, who are responsible for evil that Divinity abhors and will punish. As well, Pericles does choose to perform many good deeds. Yet within this framework the gods, too, seem to be operating, and not always in immediately pleasing ways, as is well put by Pericles' troubling question after Thaisa's death:

O you gods!

Why do you make us love your goodly gifts

And snatch them straight away? (3.1.22-24)

Earlier, however, Pericles had known an inversion of this pattern when the armour that seemed to have been snatched away was given back. Knight calls the fisherman "the means of Pericles's retrieving of his fortune" and argues that "the equation sea=fortune, hinted throughout Shakespeare, is in Pericles emphatic and obvious,"¹⁰⁵ but, when Pericles gives thanks for the armour he personifies the sea rather than abstracting it. Pericles loved his "brace," he says,

Till the rough seas, that spares not any man,
 Took it in rage, though calm'd have given't again.
 I thank thee for't; my shipwreck now's no ill,
 Since I have here my father gave in his will. (2.1.130-33)

Shakespeare's imagery suggests both the English and Hebrew fear of the sea, and the Psalmist's trust in the God who "rulest the raging of the sea" (Ps. 89: 9). It is also based both upon the story of Christ calming the tempestuous sea (Matt. 8: 23-37), and Gower's account of how, when Apollonius' ship is about to "goun down into the depe... he that all thing mai kepe / Unto this lord was merciablen" (8.627-29). This Judaeo-Christian understanding of providence is also found elsewhere in Shakespeare, as in his allusions to Him that "providentially cares for the sparrow" (AYL 2.3.45, Ham. 5.2. 231; cf. Luke 12: 6-7); throughout the romances, the heroes are "led on by heaven" (Per. 5.3.90) and "come ashore...by providence divine" (Tmp. 1.2.159-60). Other descriptions of the sea's symbolism are possible, such as Frye's Freudian view that "the sea is particularly the image of an unconscious which seems paradoxically to forget everything and yet potentially to remember everything."¹⁰⁶ However, this view lacks both the coherence and historical relevance to Shakespeare of the Christian tradition. This tradition finds no better summary than George Herbert's "Providence," which reads almost like a commentary on Pericles' sea imagery and the providential plot which leads Marina to her father; praising God, Shakespeare's younger contemporary writes:

Tempests are calm to thee; they know thy hand,
 And hold it fast, as children do their fathers,
 Which cry and follow. Thou hast made poor sand
 Check the proud sea, ev'n when it swells and gathers. (45-48)

In this tradition the sea represents providence rather than chaos, and is emblematic of God's will.¹⁰⁷ Human happiness depends on accepting that will, as Dante so eloquently taught: "In His will is our peace. It is that sea / to which all moves, all that Itself creates / and Nature bears through all Eternity" (Paradiso 3. 85-87). Pericles' piety is never as devout as Herbert's or Dante's, and only Marina absolutely assists providence, but right from the start of the play Pericles has said to the gods, "I am son and servant to your will" (1.1.23); by contrast, a demonic opposite of Dante's peace is shown in Antiochus, he who is "so great can make his will his act" (1.2.18). It is thus an

error to interpret Gower's comment late in Pericles--"wishes fall out as they're will'd" (5.2.16)-- as meaning "that man's will is still the 'final cause' in Pericles, but that it is now the audience's will, identified within the narrative structure with Fortune," which is "the prime mover in life."¹⁰⁸ Such a reading not only neglects Pericles' theological dimension, but perverts its fundamental tenets; in this play, wishes finally are granted only as they are willed by Divinity.

That it cannot be human will controlling the simultaneous ferocity and benevolence of the sea is most miraculously demonstrated at the poetic heart of Pericles, 3.1. and 3.2. Commenting that "only a response most insensitive to Shakespeare's storm poetry" can fail to see that here the sea "storm is generalized," Knight argues that by having Pericles call Marina "this fresh new seafarer" (3.1.41), Shakespeare shows Marina's birth as "an entry into storm-tossed mortality recalling the crying child of old Lear's lunatic sermon."¹⁰⁹ Rather than to "this great stage of fools" (Lr. 4.6.183), Marina--a name not found in Shakespeare's sources but aptly meaning "the sea"--must cry that she is now come aboard a ship of fools that "shakes / On Neptune's billow" (3.0.45), and is by "fortune mov'd" which ever "Varies again" (3.0.46-47). Marina herself reminds us of this imagery years later by recalling being "Born in a tempest when my mother died," and reflecting, "This world to me is a lasting storm / Whirring me from my friends" (4.1.18-20). Most frightening of all, though, is Pericles' sad prediction that, because Marina's birth has meant her mother's death, "Even at the first / Thy loss is more than can thy portage quit" (3.1.34-35). How deceived by appearances both Pericles and the play's (un)fortunate theology can be is exemplified by the sailor's "superstition" that the sea gods will not quiet until the apparently dead Thaisa is thrown overboard (3.1.47-50). Of course, Pericles fails his new wife by allowing the sailors to do so, though it is equally obvious that Shakespeare's story requires him to blunder; momentarily, ethics and theology are overshadowed, and it is only slight hyperbole to say that "here Shakespeare's imagery, his poetry, dictates the action."¹¹⁰ Indeed, many critics argue that with this scene Pericles' verse undergoes such "a sea-change" that dual authorship seems likely.¹¹¹ Yet, like some other Shakespearean plays, in the political scenes of Pericles' first two acts much of the "public moralizing" is "sententious," and the change in Act 3 might correspond to a shift in "interest from Pericles as prince to Pericles as man, husband, and father."¹¹² Indeed, one passage often cited as "supreme poetry"¹¹³ is Pericles' grisly but strangely beautiful imagining of his wife resting in the sea:

A terrible child-bed hast thou had, my dear,
 No light, no fire. Th' unfriendly elements
 Forgot thee utterly, nor have I time
 To give thee hallow'd to thy grave, but straight
 Must cast thee, scarcely coffin'd, in the ooze,
 Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
 The e'er-remaining lamps, the belching whale
 And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse.
 Lying with simple shells. (3.1.56-64)

Unlike Lear's storm scenes, which have been thought unplayable, Pericles' poetry has been supported by its spectators' ability to in their "imagination hold / This stage the ship" (3.0.58-59); even before modern technology, in Samuel Phelps' 1854 production the "spectacle of waves and shaking ship won the day."¹¹⁴ Indeed, technology may inhibit the poetic imagination required by the scene, and in Peter Sellars' acclaimed 1983 production the storm "was created in part by actors at the sides of the stage shaking bits of metal but chiefly by a light bulb wildly swinging here and there across a darkened stage."¹¹⁵

The aesthetic pleasures of 3.1 aside, this scene also raises a foundational question which one critic calls Pericles' "central problem": "what value can attach to a life where everything passes away?"¹¹⁶ Oddly, this same critic argues that this "is not a problem fully resolved or even explored" by Pericles, which rather suggests that "life is always a mixture of love and violence, pleasure and pain, gain and loss";¹¹⁷ essentially, fortune's ever changing currents control the seas. A completely contrary response to this problem--that life can be restored by divine providence--is suggested, however, by 3.2 of Pericles. Largely this suggestion is supernatural and theological, as for "perhaps the first time" Shakespeare gives us "a poetry of resurrection."¹¹⁸ For example, an anonymous gentleman (akin to those gentlemen that make similarly charged theological comments in The Winter's Tale 5.2) says to the doctor Cerimon, after Thaisa's revival, that "The heavens, / Through you, increase our wonder" (3.2.95-96). Cerimon's skill, as well, "goes beyond science, in the modern sense, resembling rather the raising of the dead in the New Testament."¹¹⁹ Felperin, similarly, regards Thaisa's resurrection as "analogous to the raising of the Queen of Marcyll, apparently dead after childbirth, and of Lazarus in the Digby Mary Magdalene, and Cerimon

himself to the Christ of the miracle play."¹²⁰ Yet, even while Shakespeare's audience watched what they might very well have taken as an analogue to one of Christianity's most sublime doctrinal mysteries, the "resurrection of the body" affirmed by the "Apostle's Creed,"¹²¹ Shakespeare characteristically lightens the mood by having Cerimon joke, upon finding the coffin, that "If the sea's stomach be o'ercharg'd with gold, / 'Tis a good constraint of fortune it belches upon us" (3.2.54-55). Christian interpreters must also note that Cerimon himself compares his task to an "Egyptian" legend (3.2.84), and many of his values and practices are analogous to the Hermetic practices described in texts such as the supposed Hermes Trismegistus' *Asclepius*, popularized in the Renaissance by Giordano Bruno and others; their neoplatonism or "Egyptian magical religion" preached "the return of moral law, the banishment of vice, the renewal of all good things, a holy and most solemn restoration of nature herself."¹²² Yet Renaissance neoplatonism can be orthodoxly Christian, as in the case of Nicholas of Cusa, or it may take the syncretic, variously heretical Christianity of Bruno and the Florentine neoplatonists.¹²³ Which form to see in Cerimon is a difficult question, but some suggestions are provided by a passage in which Cerimon "defines his own life-wisdom"¹²⁴ by saying,

I hold it ever
Virtue and cunning were endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches. Careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expend;
But immortality attends the former,
Making a man a god. (3.2.27-31)

In defence of Cerimon's orthodoxy, it is important to note that the "virtue" associated most closely with him throughout *Pericles* is charity, "the chiefest" of the Christian virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). In keeping with the Pauline contrast between "knowledge" that "puffeth up" and "love" that "edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1), a Second Gentleman praises Cerimon not only for "your knowledge" or "personal pain," but always for charity, "Your purse, still open" (3.2.47). As well, Gower's epilogue praises Cerimon for "the worth that learned charity aye wears" (5.3.94). The meaning of Cerimon's "cunning" is less clear. It may reflect Christ telling his servants to be "wise as serpents" (Matt. 10: 16), or Cerimon might be like the "cunning artificer, and the eloquent man" whom Isaiah promises "children" will rule over (Is. 3: 3-4). Most problematic of all for Cerimon's

orthodoxy is his failure, like Satan's (cf. Gen. 3:5), to distinguish between literally becoming a god through one's own virtue, and becoming a "son of god" who is given eternal life (John 1:12). This failure might cause a critic such as A.P. Riemer, who leans heavily on Florentine neoplatonism in interpreting Shakespeare's romances, to seat Cerimon in the same school since, "in the words of Pico della Mirandola's Oration on the Dignity of Man, men become gods."¹²⁵ However, not even Pico uses the words that Riemer attributes to him, and rather says a man may become "the son of God," or be "made one with God"; the orthodox sense of these words is further made clear when Pico adds that God "is set above all things."¹²⁶ A Reformation theologian, following St. Paul and stressing salvation by faith and grace alone (cf. Eph. 2:8), could justly regard both Pico and Cerimon as heretical, but both the book of James (2: 17-24) and Christ's terrifying vision of Judgement day (Matt. 25: 31-46) suggest that charity is the crucial virtue which makes one "the heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7).

Cerimon's controversial words may, perhaps, be taken as a hyperbolic metaphor that is based on Pericles' entirely orthodox theology of glory. By causing "the resurrection of the body" and allowing Thaisa to be "raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15: 42-43), Cerimon is fulfilling Gower's promise "to make men glorious" (1.0.9). Further, we hear echoes of Gower's report that audiences read Pericles "for restoratives" (1.0.8) when we are told that because of Cerimon's "charity ... hundred's call themselves / Your creatures, who by you have been restor'd." (3.2.43-5). Yet Cerimon also echoes Gower's respect for old "authors" (1.0.20) by telling us that he learned his "secret art" by "turning o'er authorities" (3.2.32-33). Here his characterization clearly anticipates Prospero, who himself seems to follow Cerimon when he recounts how "Graves at my command / Have wak'd their sleepers" (Tmp.5.1.48). Yet the crucial virtuous act of Prospero is to renounce this "rough magic" (5.1.48-50), because the power to resurrect is one that should be reserved for God alone. Cerimon, by contrast, is never shown making a similar renunciation, yet he remains among the "sheep" praised in Pericles' epilogue (5.3.93-94). Perhaps, like the question of the religion of the ghost in Hamlet, the question of Cerimon's orthodoxy can only be answered by seeing him as a unique dramatic character who clearly draws upon Christian theology, but only in a manner clear enough to support his purposes within the world of Pericles. Often in the romances, Shakespeare does draw on Christian neoplatonism without speaking of the precise theological distinctions which separate orthodox from heretical neoplatonism, though the

development between Cerimon and Prospero may suggest a growth in understanding of this theology.

In Pericles, a mediation of meaning less direct than explicit Christian doctrine is used to portray Cerimon's revival or resurrection (as in The Winter's Tale, we cannot be quite sure what to call it, being told more of what gives life than about the nature of death) of Thaisa, particularly the repetition or reversal of Pericles' own poetic or thematic concerns. For example, reversing the discrepancy between outer riches and inner virtue, Thaisa and Cerimon have both. The true worth missed by the sailors is partially compensated for by Pericles packing Thaisa's coffin with riches to pay for burial and writing, in a note, that she is "worth all our mundane cost" of worldly riches (3.2.71). Because of his virtue, Cerimon recognizes the value still in her life, though he himself has a "Rich tire" (3.2.22). Then, in the less controversial neoplatonic symbolism of music, the imagery of Pericles corresponds closely to The Tempest and much of Shakespeare's work, where music is often "the antagonist to tempests."¹²⁷ In many spheres of Elizabethan culture, music was seen "not simply as a diversion but as an act of faith."¹²⁸ Even in drama, music has several important functions: music "accompanies the perception of a metaphysical truth ... symbolizes the social harmony between men (love of humanity) or between man and woman (marriage) ... [is a] remedy for despondence and is even capable of restoring life to death."¹²⁹ Music's final ability here is the most unusual, but it is clearly suggested both in The Winter's Tale (5.3.100), and when Cerimon revives Thaisa by saying:

The still and woeful music that we have,
Cause it to sound, Beseech you. [Music]
The viol once more; how thou stirr'st, thou block!
The music there! [Music] I pray you give her air.
Gentlemen, this queen will live. (3.2.90-94)

Even in today's scientific culture, there is evidence that music therapy may still be medically useful,¹³⁰ but extratextual evaluation of Cerimon's rich poetry need not focus solely upon whether music actually has the capacities attributed to it by the Elizabethans. In many cultures, music has also been symbolic of a beauty synonymous with truth, and in the raising of Thaisa, as Knight notes in one of his most eloquent passages, the poetic truth of many of Shakespeare's most beautiful images is brought sharply into focus:

From his earliest plays [Shakespeare] has been deeply engaged with sea-tempests and death; with true and false appearance; with riches, real and unreal, in relation to love; and with wealth strewn on the sea's floor (as in Clarence's dream), the treasures it has gorged; and more than once with a jewel thrown into the sea, as a symbol of love, for ever lost; and, continually, with music as an almost mystical accompaniment of love, reunion, and joy. All are together here, as the supreme jewel, Thaisa, is given back.¹³¹

For readers without Knight's knowledge of the canon, Shakespeare kindly gives Cerimon a passage of even more poetic beauty, one which should allow no reader to mistake the value of Thaisa's miraculous new life:

She is alive; behold
Her eyelids, cases to those heavenly jewels
Which Pericles hath lost, begin to part
Their fringes of bright gold. The diamonds
Of a most praised water doth appear,
To make the world twice rich. Live, and make
Us weep to hear your fate, fair creature,

Rare as you seem to be. <She moves.> (3.2.98-104)

Can criticism add anything to such a passage? Knight usefully notes that "Rare" is a word used to describe "everything most wondrous in this and later plays,"¹³² and Felperin rightly says that "it is worth noting that "wonder," the emotion so often appealed to in Pericles and the romances, is produced quite differently from 'surprise'";¹³³ yet is Felperin correct that

in a play like Pericles we feel wonder when we finally see come true what we have all along taken on faith--in both St. Paul's sense of the evidence of things unseen and Coleridge's sense of willed belief in the dramatic illusion before us, incredible as it may be as an imitation of life. (160)

My question here can only be answered according to the broadest horizons of truth and value, but a Christian might note that Felperin here omits the first half of St. Paul's definition of faith, "the ground of things which are hoped for" (Heb. 11:1). As an imitation of perhaps the profoundest of all human hopes-- a hope which has been aptly put even within twentieth-century pop culture:

"Everything dies, that's a fact, but maybe everything that dies, someday comes back"¹³⁴--

Cerimon's description of Thaisa's beauty, the extravagance of which recalls (or foretells) the glittering jewels of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 18-21), can awaken a faith that is the very opposite of a blind illusion, a faith which sees that nothing is more valuable than the miracle of life.

Pericles as a whole, though, has perhaps not evoked as much wonder as the other romances because a scene of such power comes so early in the play, and many of its motifs and images are repeated in the recognition scenes. Before leaving Thaisa, one other key evaluative question should be addressed, however, and that is the reason for her becoming a priestess at Diana's temple rather than leaving Tharsus to search for Pericles. David James, who thinks the resurrection motif fails in Pericles because of its "frequent and artistically irrelevant repetition," ridicules Thaisa as "a more than usually silly mortal" who "is stored away in a temple."¹³⁵ Carol Thomas Neely, meanwhile, critiques Act 3 of Pericles because "the concomitant births and deaths exaggerate the trauma of birth and manifest its physical and psychological consequences for the mother,"¹³⁶ a structural feature of Shakespearean romance that "causes broken nuptials in the older generation, allows female sexuality to be represented by the chaste innocence of young daughters, and shifts emotional and dramatic emphasis to father-daughter bonds."¹³⁷ It is true that Shakespeare's story cannot reach its intended, moving conclusion unless Thaisa stays in Tharsus, but both critics here substitute metadramatic structural analysis for the strong, consistent emphasis throughout Pericles on the value of human chastity. Rather than Neptune, the ruling deity now becomes Diana--who very often in medieval and Renaissance art is the classical analogue for the chastity of Christ or the Virgin Mary--as she helps Marina to preserve her chastity even while reforming a brothel, and also preserves Thaisa so that her nuptial bond with Pericles is never broken. These events are unlikely as realistic imitations of human life but, if intended as didactic art designed to teach chastity,¹³⁸ the purpose of such scenes is clear. Neely ignores this intention, though, casually noting that Thaisa's chaste seclusion is "a curious denial of her sexual initiation and motherhood."¹³⁹ This response is unsurprising from twentieth-century critics still responding to the Victorian repression of sexuality but, given the problems caused by sexual vice in the late twentieth century, today the value of chastity could again be strongly argued.

Chastity and many of the other virtues valued thus far in Pericles find their embodiment in Marina, who is easily the most praised character in the play and even inspired a retitling and revising of the play to include only its last three acts.¹⁴⁰ Marina "incorporates both the poetic worth

of Thaisa and the sacred magic of Cerimon" and is "all but art personified ... that to which all art aspires, which it seeks to express."¹⁴¹ As Pericles says at their reunion, she is "a palace / For the crown'd Truth to dwell in" (5.1.121-22). Pericles' description here of Marina might also be used to support the notion that his daughter--whom we meet fourteen years after Thaisa's revival--represents truth as the daughter of time, the *veritas filia temporis* which expresses the Christian relationship between time and revealed truth.¹⁴² Mother and daughter in Pericles have also been taken as representative of natural magic,¹⁴³ or "nature veneration,"¹⁴⁴ for, when Thaisa revives, Cerimon says, "nature awakes ... she gins / To blow into life's flower again" (3.2.92, 94), and Marina first appears in the play carrying flowers (4.1.13). Felperin, though, explains these passages by further tracing both Marina's religious significance and her dramatic ancestry:

In Pericles, nature becomes redeemable, for grace, personified in Marina, abounds even to the worst of sinners, just as it had in countless miracle and morality plays before Pericles. Marina culminates a long and popular tradition of incorruptibly virtuous heroines going back to the saint's legend of St. Agnes. The pre-Shakespearean drama teemed with such maidens (Susanna, Virginia, Patient Grissil) who seem to have evoked nothing but admiration in contemporary audiences, and whose outlines are still visible in Desdemona and Cordelia.¹⁴⁵

As Pericles' daughter, though, Marina also inherits her father's musical ability, artful eloquence, moral courage, and both his good and bad luck. After narrowly escaping being killed at the command of Dionyza, her proverbially evil foster-mother who might also be a sister to Lady Macbeth (cf. 4.3.4), Marina is sold by pirates to a brothel. Paradoxically, this proves to be not only the perfect breeding ground for her virtue to grow, but also the place where she will meet her husband.

Such events can hardly be noticed, of course, without realizing that the brothel in Pericles must not be anything like one in real life, nor even as mildly dangerous as those we enter in the Henry IV plays or Measure for Measure, so it is quite puzzling to find many critics commending the "realism" of the brothel scenes.¹⁴⁶ The language of Pericles' brothel does refer to sex directly enough for Phelps' 1854 production to heavily bowdlerize it--an excision which one Victorian critic praised by saying that one now "need not be afraid to visit that foul room at Myteline."¹⁴⁷ However, Felperin usefully reminds modern readers that the "profane argot" of Pericles' brothel

workers “constantly reminds us of the religious authority they violated,” and goes out on a limb by adding: “I venture to say that this is not the idiom of real or realistic prostitutes.”¹⁴⁸ Rather, the very vice of the brothel characters contributes to Pericles’ moral teaching, sometimes consciously, as when Pander says, “the sore terms we stand upon with the gods will be strong with us for giving o’er” (4.2.3-35), or unconsciously, as when the Bawd laments that Marina “would make a puritan of the devil” (4.6.9). Then there are the brothel customers, briefly shown as two “gentlemen,” who after having heard “divinity preach’d” by Marina, pledge to be “out of the road of rutting for ever” (4.5.4, 9). Ironically, but in keeping with John Gardner’s central conception in Moral Fiction, the moral impact of Pericles as a whole is diminished if the brothel scenes are bowdlerized, for then the contrast to Marina’s chastity is lost. Continuing Pericles’ central themes and imagery, Marina proves the real value both of herself and chastity not only by preserving her “jewel” (4.6.154), but also by teaching something of greater moral and even economic worth, training in the arts.¹⁴⁹ Since even Boult becomes convinced of this value (4.6.199), failing to see it is a rather harsh comment on the values of those modern critics who claim that Marina is an “unhuman” symbol of chastity.¹⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly, the critic just cited also misses the humour of the brothel scenes, but their comic quality is a key reason for their often noted stage success. Sellars’ 1983 production exploited this comic potential by having characters such as Boult wear “a little pig’s snout held on by a rubber band,”¹⁵¹ an appropriately unrealistic emblem of how we should feel towards Pericles’ bawds. Stage props can only add so much to the moral emblems which Shakespeare’s play provides, however, as Tony Robertson’s 1974 London production proved by setting the entire play in a transvestite brothel¹⁵² --the logical result of which was Robertson’s 1983 production, which set the whole play in an insane asylum.¹⁵³ Stratford, Ontario’s 1986 performance did find some of Wilkins’ Painful Adventures as an effective way to add coherence to Act 4,¹⁵⁴ but it is Shakespeare’s own words, especially his bawdy, that provide most of the theatrical humour. In Brian Vickers’ view, Pericles’ brothel scenes give “almost a demonstration of the creation of sexual innuendo.”¹⁵⁵ Shakespeare’s figures of speech mimic the natural idiom of an English bawdy house, but these verbal techniques are as much derived from rhetoric as reality. Vickers notes the Bawd’s “fluent antitheses” and complex prose schemes such as *gradatio*, and concludes, “One

would not have expected to find rhetoric in a brothel.”¹⁵⁶ Yet all the same elements are present in Falstaff’s speeches at the Boar’s Head Tavern, its food / sex metaphors again being heard when the Bawd offers Boult “a morsel of the spit” (4.2.131), and in the brothel of Measure for Measure, a play whose mix of the bawdy and the chaste is very much echoed in Pericles. Particularly, the *paranomasia* which parallels the story of Isabella and Mariana with that of Barnardine and Ragozine is again used when Boult tells Marina, “I must have your maidenhead taken off, or the common hangman shall execute it” (4.6.127-28).¹⁵⁷ It is true that Angelo presents a much greater danger to Isabella than Lysimachus does to Marina, but both men are “moulded out of faults” (MM, 5.1.439)--a word that may mean both “imperfections” and sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁸ Both men are thus prepared for marriage, and in both plays the comic ineptitude of the brothel characters assures the audience that a comic ending is possible. Apart, then, from the illustration of the strength of chastity and the brief dumb show of Pericles mourning before supposedly dead Marina’s grave--which again illustrates “how belief may suffer by foul show!” (4.4.23)--the purpose and value of Act 4 is not at all to portray realistically a bawdy house, but rather to relax the audience with laughter before they again experience the sublime poetic and religious drama that they had seen and heard in Act 3.

Uniquely among Shakespeare’s plays, Act 5 of Pericles gives not one but two moving examples of what theorists of comedy call “recognition scenes.”¹⁵⁹ The first of these, Pericles’ reunion with Marina, has become the most praised scene of the entire play, especially onstage. What accounts for this scene’s appeal? To coherently describe its value, it is useful to notice how it employs the conventions of the “recognition scenes” of earlier comedies, but also varies and advances such scenes in a way typical of Shakespeare’s romances. First, the meeting of Marina and Pericles is a recognition scene because, due to the ages at which they were separated, neither can immediately recognize the other, and so there is an even more tentative questioning of identity than, for example, between Sebastian and Viola (TN 5.1.225-256). As with earlier comic characters such as Olivia, Orlando, or Mariana, in recognizing each other Marina and Pericles also recognize their own true selves. Because he is in a deep depression, this recognition is especially important for Pericles, as Frye has noticed while explaining that “the movement upward toward self-recognition is central to romance.”¹⁶⁰ The way in which this occurs in Pericles parallels the moment of self-recognition in the Confessio. Earlier Gower called himself a “Caitif” (1.161), but

when Venus later asks his name he answers as a man, saying simply, "John Gower" (8.2321). Similarly, when Marina asks, "What is your title?", Pericles directly says, "I am Pericles of Tyre" (5.1.203-04). Marina has similarly identified herself, saying "My name is Marina" (5.1.142), and such simple statements underline again the importance--particularly in the theatre--of seeing the two characters not as abstract morality play figures, but as "flesh and blood" and "no fairy" (Per. 5.1.153-54). Literal, naturalistic language thus individualizes Pericles and Marina throughout their meeting, and their simple, direct words convey powerful emotions.¹⁶¹ Here the Confessio may be contrasted, for it tells that when Apollonius met his daughter after their long separation, she "axeth him demands strange / Wherof she made his herte change," and "in proverbe and in probleme ... bad he schold deme / In many soubtil question" (8. 1676-1683). Marina, by contrast, has to be compelled to tell her story because she is worried that her strange history will seem "like lies, disdain'd in the reporting" (5.1.118). When she does tell her story, Marina makes Pericles "herte change" through a reserve and simplicity of speech akin to Cordelia's "restoration" of Lear (4.6. 23).

Recalling Cordelia, though, reminds us that Frye exaggerates somewhat in saying that self-recognition "is in fact what all recognition scenes really point to."¹⁶² As an individual human character, Pericles, like Lear, is also a father recognizing his long-lost daughter, and much of the emotion generated by their meeting derives from the fact that, unlike many earlier comedies, Pericles' recognition scene is also a reunion scene which follows a long period of separation. At the risk of redundant postmodern reiterations of "re," it should further be recognized that, just as Cordelia might call her meeting with Lear a "restoration," both Helicanus and Marina might call 5.1 a "recovery" scene, since that is the word by which both pledge to help Pericles return to health (5.1. 54, 76). By singing to him, Marina reminds us of Cerimon's use of music in restoring the health of Thaisa.¹⁶³ Pericles' illness, like Lear's (4.7), can be described as melancholy, and certainly Shakespeare was familiar with the use of music as a cure for melancholy and madness.¹⁶⁴ Melancholy was considered a spiritual malady in the Renaissance,¹⁶⁵ and Pericles' recovery may thus be compared to the Apocrypha's Tobit, whose "eyes had a film of blindness until cured with medicine brought by his child."¹⁶⁶

Religious tradition also reminds us that in the miracle plays the "whole story exists in a very special sense for the sake of its recognition scene."¹⁶⁷ Pericles continues its many analogues

to this tradition by making 5.1. a reiteration scene of many of the play's central images and abstract ideas, as when Pericles tells Marina that "Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou lookest / Modest as Justice" (5.1.120-21), or that she also looks "Like Patience gazing on kings' graves, and smiling / Extremity out of act" (5.1.138-39). Such references "are the fossils of similar scenes in an earlier drama, where Justice, Truth, Patience, and ministering angels did appear onstage bringing reunion and reconciliation."¹⁶⁸ Thanks to Pericles' plot and themes these abstractions become especially vivid, though, and far from being an unfeeling stoic virtue, "Patience is here an all-enduring calm seeing *through* tragedy to the end; smiling through endless death to ever-living eternity."¹⁶⁹

Concrete poetic imagery is also beautifully reiterated when the scene seeks to glad our ears and please our eyes through a poetic harmony of ethics and visual encounter. Like everything in the play, this harmony must first be struggled for, however, and initially Marina's singing only provokes her ill, grief stricken father to anger. She appeals to him aurally, "my lord lend ear," then points out the irony of his having no eyes for her:

I am a maid,
My lord, that ne'er before invited eyes,
But have been gazed on like a comet. (5.1.84-86)

As he fails to respond, Marina says in an aside, "I will desist," but--in sharp contrast to the violent slap which the mad Apollonius gives his daughter at the same point (8.1694)--here an ethical force catches her ear: "something glows upon my cheek, / And whispers in mine ear 'Stay till he speak'" (5.1.95-96). When he does speak, Pericles calls for visual confirmation, saying, "Pray you, turn your eyes upon me," and then gives a *prosographia* or lively description¹⁷⁰ that likens Marina to his wife and emphasizes both her visual beauty and aural eloquence; the maid before him has

My queen's square brows;
Her stature to an inch; as wand-like straight;
As silver-voic'd; her eyes as jewel-like
And cas'd as richly; in pace another Juno;
Who starves the ears she feeds, and makes them hungry
The more she gives them speech. (5.1.108-113)

This rich imagery again reminds us of Thaisa's restoration which, primarily, was a resurrection scene. Pericles' and Marina's meeting can be called the same, since each has believed the other to be dead. Whereas Lear says to Cordelia, "You do me wrong to take me out o'th' grave" (4.7.44), Pericles explicitly gives credit to Marina for giving him new life. He calls her, saying, "O, come hither, / Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget" (5.1.194-95), then tells her that in everything about her tale, she "hast been godlike perfit," giving "The heir of kingdoms, and another life / To Pericles thy father" (5.1.206-08). Marina being called "god-like" here and "goddess-like" by Gower (5.1.4) reminds us again of her religious analogues, and of Christian resurrection resulting in a glorious redemption from all sorrows. As with 3.2, it is difficult for criticism to add to meaning already so profound, but Stephen in Joyce's *Ulysses* comes close to appreciating this moment by telling "the quaker librarian":

-- If you want to know what are the events which cast their shadow over the worst hell of time of King Lear, Othello, Troilus and Cressida, look to see when and how the shadow lifts. What softens the heart of a man, Shipwrecked in storm dire, Tried, like another Ulysses, Pericles, prince of Tyre?

Head, redconecapped, buffeted, brineblinded.

-- A child, a girl placed in his arms, Marina.¹⁷¹

Joyce admirably focuses upon the concrete, human experience of father and daughter meeting, but an even more moving description of this same experience, and a fuller suggestion of the poetic and religious value of Pericles' 5.1, is offered by T.S. Eliot's poem "Marina."

Eliot's "images return" (line 14) us to Pericles' perspective, which early in the poem focuses on the medieval seven deadly sins, the gluttony of the "tooth of the dog," the sloth in the "the sty of contentment," the lust during "the ecstasy of the animals," all of which conclude in "Death" (6-13). All of these sins, though,

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,

A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog

By this grace dissolved in place. (14-16)

Here Eliot evokes the notion of Marina as embodying the grace of Mary, the *stella maris* or "star of the sea."¹⁷² His poem's implied speaker, Pericles, is just beginning to recognize "this face," trying to understand her strength, and first he also remembers his battered ship, whose "garboard stake

leaks” and “seams need caulking” (28). Then, recognizing not just himself or his daughter but also a greater truth beyond both, he sees

This form, this face, this life
 Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships. (29-32)

With this vision, Eliot’s Pericles can finally hear music, and see who is singing:

What seas what shores what granite island towards my timbers
 And woodthrush calling through the fog
 My daughter. (33-35)

For Shakespeare’s Pericles, recognizing Marina also means seeing a broader vision of life and hearing beautiful new music, but music with a more specific theological meaning: “the music of the spheres” (5.1.229). In the “christianized Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology” of the Renaissance,” this concept “signifies cosmic harmony,”¹⁷³ and also refers us to Boethius’ division of music into *musica instrumentalis* (applied music), *musica humana* (harmony of reason maintained between the body and the soul), and *musica mundana* (universal harmony).¹⁷⁴ When Pericles describes the music he hears as “Rarest sounds” (5.1.231), he is pointing us to this third, most wonderful kind of music, and indicating that he has become aware of that “unchanging reality superior to the world of appearances in which we live,” the reality which medieval religious drama attempted to imitate.¹⁷⁵ Pericles then falls asleep, however, an act which on a secular reading is laughably anticlimactic. Appropriately, though, some modern directors play Gregorian harmonies for the music here,¹⁷⁶ for in the Christian neoplatonism implied by “the music of the spheres” (5.1.235), Pericles may now “rest” in the short sleep that precedes being changed into Christian glory (1 Cor. 15: 51).

Poetically and theologically Pericles could end here, but as drama it still has loose plot ends to tie up. Diana now appears and tells Pericles where to find Thaisa, reminding us not only that she is the “god behind the action of [this] romance”¹⁷⁷ but also that, even after a sublime religious vision, active virtue must continue if human life is to flourish. Preparing us for this last scene, Diana tells Pericles that at her temple he must retell his story:

Reveal how thou at sea didst lose thy wife.

To mourn thy crosses, with thy daughter's, call
And give them repetition to the life. (5.2.244-46)

The word order and diction here are unusually ambiguous, even for the late plays,¹⁷⁸ but could suggest that Shakespeare himself is beginning, through his beloved wordplay, to poke fun at how many ways a recognition-reunion-resurrection might be restated. Further, in 5.3 Pericles asks "who to thank / (Besides the gods) for this great miracle" (5.3.59), and Thaisa replies that Lord Cerimon, "through whom the gods have shown their power," can "from first to last resolve you" (5.3.56-61). The repetitive religious language here possibly alludes to the "Alpha and Omega, that First and that Last" (Rev. 1:11), and again suggests the influence of the medieval miracle plays. Knight exaggerates these references by claiming that Cerimon here is "functioning very precisely as Christ Himself in the Christian scheme,"¹⁷⁹ but the impression of "re" puns resulting finally in resurrection is then strengthened even more when Pericles asks Cerimon:

Reverent sir,
The gods can have no mortal officer
More like a god than you. Will you deliver
How this dead queen relives? (5.3.62-65)

Like Leontes in The Winter's Tale (5.3.153-55), Cerimon promises an explanation later, but we do not hear one in either play; instead, "we are left with a sense of wonder,"¹⁸⁰ and the sense not to wonder whether resurrection is a reality which Shakespeare intends to portray as clearly as he had shown the certainty of death in King Lear.

More reassurance of the certainty of providence's punishments and rewards are then provided by Gower's epilogue, which is so stiffly didactic that by including it Shakespeare again clearly signals his return to the old songs of medieval drama. Modern critics often respond negatively to this speech, a typical comment being that "the wonders of reunion and reconciliation in the last scenes of this play cannot be reduced to facile couplets about the rewards of virtue."¹⁸¹ Such a critique forgets, however, that the same theology which provides the metaphysical foundation of Act 5's wondrous reconciliation also guarantees both the rewards of virtue and punishments of vice recorded by Gower. Or rather, to employ the more precise theology which the Reformation especially emphasized, Gower records that the reward of "Pericles, his queen and daughter" comes after they are "Led on by heaven," and consists finally of a glorious gift of grace

as they are “crown’d with joy at last” (5.3.86, 90). This conclusion should not surprise, for in the Confessio, Apollonius’ wife swooned for “pure joie as in a rage” (8. 1852), and then afterwards “The joie which was thilke tyde / Ther mai no mannes tunge telle” (8. 1898-99). Shakespeare, similarly, shows Thaisa fainting after being “o’erjoy’d” (5.3.21), and Pericles asking Helicanus to give him “a gash,” some “present pain,” “Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me / O’erbear the shores of my mortality” (5.1.191-93). Again, such passages record a similar emotion but opposite conclusion as in Lear, where Gloucester’s heart burst “Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief” (5.3.199). Shakespeare’s development may also be attributed to the old songs he had learned anew from Gower, who at the end of the Apollonius story in the Confessio wrote:

Tho was ther joie manyfold,
For every man this tale hath told
As for miracle, and were glade,
Bot nevere man such joie made
As doth the king, which hath his wif. (8. 1865-69)

Tales of miracle are told in order to fill their listeners with joy, Gower seems to be saying in the Confessio, and it is probably a similar intention that governs the final attempt of Shakespeare’s Gower to “glad [our] ears and please [our] eyes”(1.1.4). In his last lines, Gower reminds us of the virtue which allowed Pericles to endure until the end, and simply but warmly wishes us the same glorious gift before closing with perhaps the stiffest final words of any Shakespearean play, but words which remind us that Pericles intends to extend its value to its audience: “So, on your patience evermore attending, / New joy wait on you! Here our play has ending” (5.3.101-02).

Can Pericles make our hearts joyfully glad? This is the central evaluative question which both Gower and Shakespeare want asked of the play they have given us. One might first answer by again noting that Pericles provides an insightful introduction to the poetic imagery that will be used by Shakespeare throughout his romances, and by acknowledging that the manifold meanings mediated by Pericles can be valued in a wide variety of ways not indicated precisely by the philosophy and theology which any serious interpretation of the play tends to overemphasize. Like the Confessio, Pericles is, in an important sense, intended to “stant betwene earnest and game” (8. 3109), to be both an ethical teacher and an entertaining spectacle of play; thus, a childlike fascination with the play’s fantastic plot is not to be scorned. Yet as adult readers who cannot

authentically ignore the horizons of meaning which criticism opens for us, Pericles' serious intentions must also be evaluated. If the preceding account of Pericles' ethics and theology is at all accurate, and if T.S. Eliot was right to see Shakespeare here as "a writer who has finally seen through the dramatic actions of men into a spiritual action which transcends it,"¹⁸² then we cannot avoid taking the next step and evaluating Eliot's further comment that Shakespeare here "makes us feel not so much that his characters are creatures like ourselves, as that we are creatures like his characters, taking part like them in no common action of which we are for the most part unaware."¹⁸³ To know the uncommon joy which Gower offers, in short, we do need to decide whether Pericles has indeed provided a glimpse of the miracle of resurrection by which, according to Christianity, humanity may one day become "glorious." Although Pericles does not demand that we answer that question, and in fact encourages us to enjoy the play while considering our answer, finally the combined authority of both Gower and his poetic understudy, Shakespeare, humbly wishes that we too shall obtain the full "purchase" of Pericles' value: to recognize through dramatic art a small glimpse of what one might receive when revived, restored, and resurrected in the joy of God's glory.

Ch. 3 Endnotes

- ¹ Hoeniger, Per. xxxix.
- ² Taylor, Reinventing 21.
- ³ T.S. Eliot, unpublished lecture, qtd. Drew 127.
- ⁴ Hoeniger, Per. xxiii-xxxix.
- ⁵ Hoeniger, Per. lii-lxiii.
- ⁶ See Metz.
- ⁷ Michael xi.
- ⁸ As does Taylor, Oxford Per.
- ⁹ Knight 75.
- ¹⁰ Rowse 416; Chambers, Vol. I, 86.
- ¹¹ Strachey 57.
- ¹² Dowden 378-420; Hartwig 3-33.
- ¹³ Frye, Secular 51.
- ¹⁴ Muir, Sources 253.
- ¹⁵ Smith 1480; Danby 74-107.
- ¹⁶ Knight 70; Felperin 143-51.
- ¹⁷ See Wickham.
- ¹⁸ See Neely; Williamson 121-25.
- ¹⁹ See Allen.
- ²⁰ Strachey 60.
- ²¹ Felperin 147.
- ²² Schmidt 918-19.
- ²³ Hoeniger, Per. lxxxviii.
- ²⁴ OED 589.
- ²⁵ OED 590.
- ²⁶ Knight 48.
- ²⁷ Edwards, A Writer's 169; Frye, Natural 5-7.
- ²⁸ Hartwig 43; Felperin 146.
- ²⁹ OED 359.
- ³⁰ OED 1524.
- ³¹ Felperin 169.
- ³² Felperin 145.
- ³³ Hoeniger, "Gower" 463.
- ³⁴ Hillman 427.
- ³⁵ See Byrne.
- ³⁶ See Roberts.
- ³⁷ See Kroll.
- ³⁸ See Boxhill.
- ³⁹ Barnet, "Pericles" 213.
- ⁴⁰ Hoeniger, Per. xx.
- ⁴¹ See Hillman.
- ⁴² Hartwig 43; Arthos.
- ⁴³ Mehl 156-59.
- ⁴⁴ Hartwig 36.
- ⁴⁵ Eggers 434.
- ⁴⁶ Hoeniger, "Gower" 464.
- ⁴⁷ Hoeniger, "Gower" 468.
- ⁴⁸ Hoeniger 477.
- ⁴⁹ Felperin 147.

- ¹⁰ See Allen.
- ¹¹ Joseph 98.
- ¹² See Minnis.
- ¹³ A sense unique in Shakespeare; Schmidt 868.
- ¹⁴ Hoeniger, Per. xxi.
- ¹⁵ Rose 151-74.
- ¹⁶ Hoeniger, Per. lxxv.
- ¹⁷ Felperin, Romance 170-71.
- ¹⁸ Felperin, Romance 149.
- ¹⁹ Muir, "Shakespeare" 35.
- ²⁰ Stauffer 270.
- ²¹ Felperin, Romance 144.
- ²² Felperin, Romance 149.
- ²³ Felperin, Romance 150-51.
- ²⁴ Hunter 141.
- ²⁵ Dunbar 87.
- ²⁶ Felperin, Romance 149.
- ²⁷ Knight 37.
- ²⁸ Frye, Natural 32.
- ²⁹ Frye, Natural 32.
- ³⁰ Peterson 102.
- ³¹ Peterson 101-03.
- ³² Frye, Secular 44.
- ³³ Neely 198.
- ³⁴ Frye, Secular 44.
- ³⁵ Boose 339.
- ³⁶ Neely 198.
- ³⁷ Felperin 151.
- ³⁸ Hoeniger, Per. 66.
- ³⁹ Hillman 428.
- ⁴⁰ See Hanna.
- ⁴¹ Traversi 20.
- ⁴² See Scrinivasa.
- ⁴³ Battenhouse 195.
- ⁴⁴ Knight, Crown 73.
- ⁴⁵ Knight, Crown 52.
- ⁴⁶ Battenhouse 195.
- ⁴⁷ Matthews 179.
- ⁴⁸ Matthews 179.
- ⁴⁹ Knight, Crown 48.
- ⁵⁰ Parker 179.
- ⁵¹ Battenhouse 194.
- ⁵² Hartwig 45.
- ⁵³ Stauffer 270.
- ⁵⁴ Frye, Natural 28.
- ⁵⁵ Hoeniger, Per. lxxviii.
- ⁵⁶ Frye, Natural 30.
- ⁵⁷ Taylor, Pericles.
- ⁵⁸ Frey, "O Sacred" 296-98.
- ⁵⁹ See Hanna.
- ⁶⁰ Battenhouse 195.
- ⁶¹ Knight, Crown 73.

- ¹⁰² See Lawrence; Marshall 66-67.
- ¹⁰³ Felperin, Romance 170-71; Peterson 73; Marshall 66-67.
- ¹⁰⁴ Marshall 67.
- ¹⁰⁵ Knight 46.
- ¹⁰⁶ Frye, Secular 148.
- ¹⁰⁷ See Fabiny.
- ¹⁰⁸ Knowles 21.
- ¹⁰⁹ Knight, Crown 53.
- ¹¹⁰ Knight, Crown 57.
- ¹¹¹ Felperin, Romance 155.
- ¹¹² Felperin, Romance 155.
- ¹¹³ Knight, Crown 54.
- ¹¹⁴ Barnet, "Pericles" 211.
- ¹¹⁵ Barnet, "Pericles" 217.
- ¹¹⁶ Marsh 17.
- ¹¹⁷ Marsh 18.
- ¹¹⁸ Traversi 31.
- ¹¹⁹ Knight, Crown 56.
- ¹²⁰ Felperin, Romance 160.
- ¹²¹ Catechism 50.
- ¹²² Yates, Shakespeare's Last 91.
- ¹²³ On the opposition between these neoplatonic traditions, see Hill iii-20, 54-67.
- ¹²⁴ Knight, Crown 54.
- ¹²⁵ Riemer 170.
- ¹²⁶ Pico 225. Please note that I am here quoting the same translation, by E.L. Forbes, which Riemer claims to have consulted. See Riemer 170.
- ¹²⁷ Knight, Crown 56.
- ¹²⁸ Nosworthy, "Music" 60.
- ¹²⁹ Long 36-37.
- ¹³⁰ See Sacks.
- ¹³¹ Knight, Crown 57.
- ¹³² Knight, Crown 56.
- ¹³³ Felperin, Romance 160.
- ¹³⁴ Springsteen, "Atlantic City."
- ¹³⁵ James 233.
- ¹³⁶ Neely 203.
- ¹³⁷ Neely 202.
- ¹³⁸ See Lawrence.
- ¹³⁹ Neely 205.
- ¹⁴⁰ See Lillo.
- ¹⁴¹ Knight, Crown 64.
- ¹⁴² See Fabiny.
- ¹⁴³ See Matthews.
- ¹⁴⁴ Wincor 229.
- ¹⁴⁵ Felperin, Romance 162.
- ¹⁴⁶ Swinburne 207; Barnet, "Pericles" 218.
- ¹⁴⁷ Jerrold, qtd. Barnet 211.
- ¹⁴⁸ Felperin, Romance 161.
- ¹⁴⁹ Knight, Crown 48; See Feinberg.
- ¹⁵⁰ Marsh 218.
- ¹⁵¹ Barnet, "Pericles" 217.
- ¹⁵² See Stedman.

- ¹⁶³ See Boxhill.
- ¹⁶⁴ Barnet, "Pericles" 218.
- ¹⁶⁵ Vickers, Prose 408.
- ¹⁶⁶ Vickers, Prose 408.
- ¹⁶⁷ See Easson.
- ¹⁶⁸ Rubinstein 98. See also Measure for Measure 2.1.40.
- ¹⁶⁹ Frye, Secular 152.
- ¹⁷⁰ Frye, Secular 152.
- ¹⁷¹ Ewbank 125-26.
- ¹⁷² Frye, Secular 152.
- ¹⁷³ Hartwig 55.
- ¹⁷⁴ Hoeniger, "Musical"; Dunn 392-93.
- ¹⁷⁵ See Burton, Anatomy.
- ¹⁷⁶ Battenhouse 195.
- ¹⁷⁷ Felperin, Romance 167.
- ¹⁷⁸ Felperin, Romance 167.
- ¹⁷⁹ Knight, Crown 65.
- ¹⁸⁰ Joseph 126.
- ¹⁸¹ Joyce 195.
- ¹⁸² Parker 180.
- ¹⁸³ Rivers 69-70; Long 132; Nosworthy 60.
- ¹⁸⁴ Dunn 391-92.
- ¹⁸⁵ Felperin, Romance 170.
- ¹⁸⁶ Maguin 99.
- ¹⁸⁷ Frye, Secular 107.
- ¹⁸⁸ As Miriam Joseph notes, Shakespeare's late plays effectively use diverse schemes of grammatical construction to achieve a poetry that is "vivid, sudden, condensed" (64).
- ¹⁸⁹ Knight, Crown 69.
- ¹⁹⁰ Knight, Crown 69.
- ¹⁹¹ Eggers 441.
- ¹⁹² T.S. Eliot, unpublished lecture, qtd. Muir, Collaborator 83.
- ¹⁹³ T.S. Eliot, unpublished lecture, qtd. Muir, Collaborator 83.

“To Make My Gift the More Delay’d, Delighted”:

The “Skill in the Construction” of Cymbeline

Of the four romances, none has been more puzzling to evaluators than Cymbeline. Even Dr. Johnson’s famous, concluding condemnation of Cymbeline is prefaced by an admittance of confusion; anything good in the play, he writes, is “obtained at the expense of much incongruity,” an incongruity so acute that one need not comment further because

To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.¹

“If there is one point on which most” subsequent critics agree, notes Howard Felperin, it is that Cymbeline “offers an astounding amount of internal incongruity.”² Set “in the same pre-Christian semi-legendary period of English history as King Lear,”³ this play shares even more than the other romances in Lear’s major motifs. However, many have yet found a basic incompatibility between Cymbeline’s three major plot strands: the romantic wager plot, based both on a Dutch tale called Frederyk of Jennen and on a tale in Boccaccio’s Decameron, in which Iago-like Jachimo falsely convinces Posthumus that Imogen, daughter of Cymbeline, has committed adultery with him; the fairytale like story of Guiderius and Arviragus, the two sons of Cymbeline who were kidnapped as infants and then raised in the wild by Belarius, a courtier unjustly banished by the King; finally, the plot strand based on Holinshed’s account of the historical Cymbeline, who initially refused to pay the tribute demanded by Rome. The diversity of genre offered here caused one Romantic critic, William Hazlitt, to call Cymbeline “one of the most delightful of Shakespeare’s historical plays,” but also a “dramatic romance.”⁴ The more characteristic response, Felperin suggests, would be the bewildered questioning of Coleridge, “This riddling tale, to what does it belong / Is’t history? vision? or an idle song?” (“Phantom” ll.13-14).⁵

Later critics, unwilling to rest with an exercise in negative capability, have usually attempted to find some way to unify their understanding of this complex play. The most radical of such attempts was made when Shaw rewrote the last act of Cymbeline in order to make it more plausible;⁶ an exercise of artistic, rather than critical, license, Shaw’s version did not catch on, even in the theatre. Instead, most Victorian and early twentieth-century critics set aside questions of

stage-craft or genre to focus upon the wager plot and its emphasis on the value of marital fidelity, especially the “trial and triumph of female honour and constancy” as exemplified by Imogen.⁷ Like Shakespeare’s earlier comic heroines, Imogen disguises herself as a boy to avoid danger (and to fit Renaissance stage conventions), but unlike them she takes a name, Fidele, that almost allegorizes her response to Posthumus’ unfaithfulness. Yet Imogen has often been praised as the unique character of the play, “the most tender and the most artless” of Shakespeare’s heroines,⁸ “the woman above all Shakespeare’s women,”⁹ and a “pleasantly human paragon” of “chastity, faith, [and] fidelity.”¹⁰ The just cited critics are all male, but actress Margaret Webster also argues that Imogen “is she whom every woman in love would wish to be--free, generous, sane, miraculously happy.”¹¹ Yet Webster’s admiration of Imogen also made her argue that the second half of Cymbeline leaves us “enraged that Shakespeare should have buried our Imogen beneath all this farrago of fairytale picture books.”¹² With Quiller-Couch, however, most felt that our sense of the play’s incongruities will resolve itself “if we keep our gaze loyally on Imogen.”¹³ In the balanced account of Knight, Imogen “interthreads the play’s action, touching all persons” by being “unswerving in her course of faith; fragile yet indestructible; loved and desired by all in turn, and wronged by most.”¹⁴

Later twentieth-century critics, however, less concerned with unifying the play, saw a more problematic Imogen. For example, even she mistakes “the headless man” in 4.2 for her husband rather than Cloten, and then she accuses Pisanio of the murder, the very servant whom Posthumus had ordered to kill her. The elaborate praise given Imogen within and without the play means that a “special problem of Cymbeline is that we are presented with what seems to be an outrageously idealized view of the characters.”¹⁵ This problem is especially pronounced for Posthumus, who spectacularly fails to live up to his advance billing as romantic hero (1.1.19-27). Rather than finding any unifying moral in the play, many critics experience a growing sense of confusion as the play advances, an experience which parallels the dramatic characters’ own confusion and dream like states of confusion.¹⁶ For one, both the characters and audiences of Cymbeline are “similarly bewildered,” because “the play’s persistent irony” has “defeated their emotions just as its complexities have defeated their reason.”¹⁷ This critic then unconsciously misquotes Sidney to argue that Cymbeline “nothing affirmeth,” and offers no moral or religious answers for the real

world.¹⁸ In a similar vein, according to Arden editor J.M. Nosworthy, this play is

purely Shakespearean in its realisation that life itself is not a coherent pattern leading by orderly degrees to prosperity, as in comedy, or to destruction, as in tragedy, but a confused series of experiences, good and evil, grave and gay, momentous and trivial.¹⁹

That Cymbeline does not end in confusion causes Nosworthy to add immediately, though incoherently, that it is also “purely Shakespearean in its realisation that when certain values-- here presented as symbols--are applied, order can be won out of seemingly hopeless disorder.”²⁰ Yet, the problem of how to interpret symbolism amidst grotesque, violent scenes such as 4.2 has caused many to argue that Shakespeare here fails to integrate “realistic settings and characters” with the “ethereal, almost abstract characters of fairy tale and traditional romantic literature;”²¹ nor can the resultant confusion be eased by the *deus ex machina* appearance of Jupiter at play’s end. Rather than a romance, perhaps Cymbeline should be classed among the problem plays, for Northrop Frye calls it the “apotheosis of the problem comedies” and notes that it combines the motifs of the slandered woman from Ado, the expulsion of a false friend from All’s Well, and the confusion and reordering of the government in Measure.²² However, none of these plays employ such obvious romantic conventions, nor so brazen examples of “spatial anachronism”²³ as Cymbeline’s combination of ancient Wales, Roman Britain, and Renaissance Italy. Thus, for many other critics, Cymbeline is best understood as an “experimental” romance,²⁴ one “prone to partial or total failure,”²⁵ or one “not always successful.”²⁶ More appreciatively, it has been argued that the lack of a vital tradition of dramatic romance made Shakespeare’s late plays “doubtless the most difficult” of his works, and Cymbeline is thus “a highly significant experiment” which was “fully vindicated” in The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest.²⁷ Cymbeline has also been praised as Shakespeare’s most recapitulatory play,²⁸ and in itself mingles so many genres that it almost qualifies as a “tragical-comical-historical-pastoral” (Ham.2.2.398-99)²⁹ play which “would have been Polonius’ favourite work in the canon.”³⁰

The particular incongruity of one of its genres, the historical, is most often cited as the especial problem of Cymbeline. Nosworthy believes that “Shakespeare erred in turning Cymbeline” into the subject of romance, and argues that “some impalpable monarch like the King Phizantius of Love and Fortune [a minor source] would have served his purpose better.”³¹

Cymbeline was a “dull” figure who “would have served,” Nosworthy argues,

had it not been for what he entailed--namely a retreat to some of the least romantic pages of Holinshed and a certain temptation for Shakespeare to enlarge upon Roman military and political affairs in a manner better suited to Julius Caesar or Coriolanus than to romantic drama. Briefly, romance can carry a Cymbeline but not a Caesar; it can encompass a half-civilized Britain but not the ordered state of Rome.³²

The passage of Holinshed reprinted by Nosworthy's Arden edition, however, omits the primary discussion of Cymbeline himself, and thus we learn only how one Haie, with his two sons, led the Scots to an unlikely victory over the Danes.³³ Shakespeare may have adapted this plot for his closing battle scene in Cymbeline, but it is earlier passages from Holinshed that numerous critics cite as crucial to understanding the significance of Cymbeline's historical elements. Through these passages, some critics since Nosworthy's time have come to argue that this play's diverse plot strands mutually reinforce one another, and convey a coherent, intelligible vision.

Cymbeline is an appropriate historical king for this play, first, because we learn from Holinshed (and his sources), that he “was brought up at Rome and there made knight by Augustus Caesar,”³⁴ under whose authority he became the ruler of Britain. Cymbeline is thus a key figure in linking England to its Roman roots. According to legend, and to Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, Britain had been founded by Brut, great-grandson of Aeneas, founder of Rome; thus, authority to rule in Britain originates in Rome.³⁵ The issue of the tribute paid to Rome is crucial to the authority to rule in Britain, and so Holinshed notes first that Cymbeline was in such favour that “he was at liberty to pay his tribute or not,” but later there came a time when Britain did not pay; for a while, Augustus “was contented to wink,” but then he sent an army into Britain, to which Cymbeline submitted tribute because he “ever showed himself a friend to the Romans,” and “was loath to break with them because the youth of the Briton nation should not be deprived of the benefit to be trained and brought up among the Romans.”³⁶ Indeed, the blame for not paying the tribute was unclear, for Holinshed notes that “whether this controversy” was caused “by Cymbeline or some other prince of the Britons, I have not to avouch.”³⁷ Shakespeare seems to take up this suggestion by making the evil Queen and her brutish son, Cloten, the primary instigators of the refusal to pay tribute (3.1.14-45). When Shakespeare later has Cymbeline pay tribute, he thus presents Britain, the third Troy, as subjugating itself to its historical parent, the second Troy,³⁸

and to some degree accepts Holinshed's historiography by affirming the authority of Rome. The controversial question, however, remains why.

First, twentieth-century readers must realize that, remote though the matter of Rome seems from Renaissance England, it was vital to establishing the legitimacy of Tudor rule, often described by modern critics as the "Tudor myth."³⁹ Renaissance historians and poets traced the authority of British rulers all the way back to its Roman roots, as for example in Book II, Canto X of Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, the "chronicle of Briton kings, from Brute to Uthers rayne" which devotes a number of lines to "Kimbeline" (FQ 2.10.50). It is also true that Rome in Renaissance English literature might be Augustinian and stand for the city of man opposed to the city of God, or it might also be reviled as the seat of the Catholic papacy. There are also numerous examples in which the power of the empire of Virgil and Augustus Caesar is shown being passed to the national powers of Spain, France, or England.⁴⁰ English Stuart literature, which normally uses Rome in this latter way, attempts to extend the same divinely ordered history to James I, in effect hoping to make the Stuart myth as powerful as the Tudor myth.⁴¹ Shakespeare himself clearly engages in this attempt when he has Cranmer, in *Henry VIII*, prophecy that "Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror" will serve the reign of James just as they did the reign of Elizabeth I (5.4.47). Less directly, but like the many history plays which were intended to provide political models for and commentary upon current rulers,⁴² it has been argued that *Cymbeline* is a model of James I.

The rationale for this argument is persuasive, but not, finally, irreproachable. To begin with the minor details, it has been noted that "Shakespeare provides *Cymbeline* (unhistorically) with a daughter and two sons, which James had," and that Milford Haven was the place where Henry, Earl of Richmond landed to fight Richard III and begin the road to Tudor rule.⁴³ As well, given Richmond's Welsh background, which was also vital to Henry V's identity, Knight thinks that "probably an Elizabethan would feel a Tudor reference" in the royal boys' "Welsh upbringing," though he cautions that "such enquiries into secondary meanings are dangerous and of slight value."⁴⁴ More central, certainly, is the argument that *Cymbeline*'s final peacemaking is a model and illustration of James I motto, "*Beati Pacifici*."⁴⁵ James saw himself as successor to Brutus, Arthur, and Henry VII, and as destined to restore harmony and unite Britain under a single ruler.⁴⁶ To link James to this Roman / British history, the name of Brutus' wife in Geoffrey of

Monmouth's History, Innogen, is given to the heroine of Shakespeare's play,⁴⁷ while the name Posthumus Leonatus is also significant because Brut's heraldic animal was the lion and his mother died at his birth.⁴⁸ Many critics have thus seen in *Cymbeline* a "vast parable"⁴⁹ of England's virtue and national destiny, as Posthumus and Imogen are subverted by the excesses of the Italian Renaissance figured in Jachimo.⁵⁰ This meaning is reinforced when the young princes show the "half-magical" power that is expressed "in the instinctive assertion of royal blood."⁵¹ This power reminds us of the story of the twins Remus and Romulus founding Rome, or again of Brut, who in *Holinshed* shares with *Cymbeline*'s lost princes the motifs of mysterious descent, hunting, murder, banishment, and providential encounter.⁵² All such motifs reinforce the sense of Britain's unique destiny, an idea which fascinated Elizabethans who thought of Britain as a magical island⁵³ or, as Cloten puts it, "a world by itself" (3.1.13). However, the praise of British nationalism characteristic of the English History play⁵⁴ cannot answer the controversial question of tribute. Thus, noting that *Cymbeline* explicitly announces that, "Although the victor, we submit to Caesar" (5.5.461), critics such as Alexander Leggatt must also ask, "If Britain is a land under a special destiny, winner against odds of a great battle, why should it submit?"⁵⁵

In the Catholic approaches to this question, it has been argued that *Cymbeline* includes respectful allusions to Catholic practices,⁵⁶ and that *Cymbeline*'s peacemaking with Rome reflects either James I's attempts to negotiate with the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic Europe,⁵⁷ or an allegory in which the Anglican and Catholic churches are reunited.⁵⁸ Protestant approaches, though, argue that Imogen as "Fidele" represents faith, Posthumus a type of Red Cross Knight, and so their broken covenant can only be saved by grace alone.⁵⁹ More specifically, Posthumus' exchange of elegant Roman garments for British peasants' garb during the battle is thought to symbolize "the spiritual preeminence of reformed Protestantism over Roman Catholicism in the minds of Shakespeare and his audience."⁶⁰ Finally, in a yet more precise allegorical reading, Frances Yates argues that *Cymbeline* closely mirrors James' rejection of appeasement of the Spanish-Hapsburg powers through the engagement of Princess Elizabeth to the Protestant Elector Palatine, Frederick V, a couple represented in the play by Imogen and Posthumus.⁶¹ As for Guiderius and Arviragus, Yates sees their cave as analogous to that in the Rosicrucian manifesto the *Fama*, and its opening similarly leads in *Cymbeline* to "an outpouring of new religious

revelation in which all discord is harmonised.”⁶²

Unsurprisingly, a number of critics regard the wide range of topical allusion as either implausible or irrelevant. The associations between the royal family and Milford Haven have been rejected as unclear,⁶³ while it has been argued that because of Cymbeline’s confused, indecisive morality, James I and his children would have been insulted to be associated with such an ineffective king.⁶⁴ No less an authority on the history play than Irving Ribner, in fact, argues that Cymbeline has little political purpose, and that its historical material is of secondary importance to its romance motifs.⁶⁵ In sum, argues Hallett Smith, even noted finders of topical allusions such as G.B. Harrison admit that, “for the most part,” their research is “sheer guess work.”⁶⁶ The very imprecision of the topical allusions is important to refute critics like Felperin, who thinks that the historical action in Cymbeline, as in Henry VIII, conforms so closely to the Tudor myth that it whitewashes James.⁶⁷ Yet as much as Cymbeline can be said to praise James I, there is also good reason to argue, through scenes such as the mocking of the court by the country in 4.2, that there is “subtle satire on the exalted claims of the British royal family.”⁶⁸ At the same time, obscurity of reference here may signal a political savvy by which “Shakespeare could easily defend himself” against royal charges.⁶⁹

As many Cymbeline critics and audiences have confirmed, however, obscurity might also lead only to confusion, and so it remains important to consider the response Leggatt gives to the rationale for the payment of tribute to Rome:

The answer may lie in the one event of the play that no one refers to, yet the one event that a Jacobean audience, new to the play, would have associated with the name of Cymbeline. It was during his reign, as the play shows, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed; and, as the play cannot show, Christ was born. This is the ultimate miracle, and Cymbeline’s extraordinary act of submission shows that he is in tune with the new age of peace.⁷⁰

A Jacobean audience would have associated Cymbeline with Christ’s Incarnation, first, because of Holinshed, who notes (again in a passage omitted by Nosworthy) that apart from the question of the tribute,

Little other mention is made of his doings, except that during his reign the Saviour of

our world, our Lord Jesus Christ the only son of God, was borne of a virgin about the twenty-third year of the reign of this Cymbeline.⁷¹

The connection of Cymbeline to the Incarnation was thus very clear in Shakespeare's time, and even the often ahistorical and irreligious Northrop Frye argues that this play's allusion to "some far-reaching change in the human situation" which "is taking place off stage" is the one explicit Christian reference in the romances.⁷² With this historical context clarified, the decision to pay the tribute, to maintain Augustus' *pax romana*, and thus to contribute to preparing the world for Christ's birth, now becomes not only intelligible, but also a key act in the establishment of the divine approval of Tudor rule. Spenser makes a similar connection, focusing almost entirely upon the Incarnation before briefly mentioning the tribute at the end of this stanza in The Faerie Queene:

Next him *Tenantius* raignd, then *Kimbeline*,
 What time th'eternall Lord in fleshly slime
 Enwombd was, from wretched Adams line
 To purge away the guilt of sinfull crime:
 O joyous memorie of happy time,
 That heavenly grace so plenteously displayd; (EQ 2.10.50-57)

As Yates argues, "this passage is the germ of Cymbeline, both of the basic elements in a story found in the British History and of its spiritual meaning."⁷³ In Spenser's apt, colloquial words, the entrance of Christ into the base world of "fleshly slime" was a wondrously incongruous event, but one whose universal effects reached all the way from Bethlehem to the shores and fields of Britain, as mystery plays such as the Second Shepherd's Pageant had celebrated during the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance.

The divine right of James I could also be seen as being advanced through the connections Shakespeare traces between Cymbeline and the Incarnation. Yet given the tenuous, temporally limited nature of all topical allusions, many critics have chosen to avoid specific political meanings and focus instead upon the light which the Incarnation casts upon the play as a whole. Robin Moffet, for example, argues that Cymbeline reflects the nativity by showing us a world in which man is immersed in sin and then restored to life through supernatural intervention.⁷⁴ This reading attempts to unify the play's genres, as the regeneration of the family, the state (Cymbeline and the princes), and the world (Rome and Britain) is an imperfect analogue of the perfect restoration that

is begun by the Incarnation.⁷⁵ Similarly, Felperin argues that just as the incarnation “represents a turning point within Christian history,” from the “tragical history” of “wrath and justice” and “nature and law,” to “a new era of grace” characterized by “love and mercy,” so a similar “movement occurs within Cymbeline, whose first four acts are a fabric of coercive and vindictive actions and reactions.”⁷⁶ This design is shared by “Elizabethan romance, Christian history and the Tudor myth,” and once this is seen, so far from the plots being incongruous, Felperin can argue that Cymbeline has a “most extraordinary unity of design” and is the “most unified” of Shakespeare’s romances.⁷⁷ Given that these readings are not specifically Catholic or Protestant, and that Shakespeare’s and his Anglican country’s own religious allegiances are too complex to be known with any surety, perhaps it is best to focus more generally on the way the offstage light of Christ’s Incarnation illuminates the play’s onstage action. At the same time, the unity of Cymbeline is much enhanced if one also sees that this same light also illumined both the structure of romantic literature, and the divine right of British kings.

Yet to extend this unity to Cymbeline’s fifth act, which has often been criticized because of its improbable action, many think it essential to recognize the probability of a coherent and fundamentally Christian interpretation of the theophany of Jupiter, the classical god who appears to Posthumus in 5.4. As noted in chapter two above, classical deity often has a Christian significance in the Renaissance, and the Stuart ban on dramatists referring directly to Christianity would have made classical deity the likely recourse if Shakespeare wished to make such a reference. Nor can these Christian references be taken simply as unconscious idioms. As the Italian humanist Mutianus Rufus wrote to a friend, “You, since Jupiter, the best and greatest god, is propitious to you, may despise lesser gods in silence. When I say Jupiter, understand me to mean Christ and the true God.”⁷⁸ To move from linguistic possibility to dramatic probability, though, and to actually see the vision of Jupiter as “a deliberate Shakespearean analogue to the immanent descent of Christ,”⁷⁹ it is necessary to focus more closely upon the deity’s actual message.

Before the twentieth-century, many Cymbeline critics refused to do precisely this, arguing that because of its stylistic simplicity, the theophany could not be Shakespeare’s work. Knight pioneered the argument against this view, pointing out that the theophany’s phraseology resembles that of other ritualistic directions in Shakespeare’s final period,⁸⁰ and that it aptly concludes a work already “saturated with religious suggestion.”⁸¹ Jupiter’s response to the choral prayer from the

Leonatus family, as in King Lear but with a very different conclusion, is “entwined with meditations on human justice or injustice.”⁸² As well, pointing to Posthumus’ two preceding, “agonized soliloquies,” Knight demands, “If [Jupiter] does not appear, to what do these tormented soliloquies lead?”⁸³ Where they do not lead, he then emphasizes, is to the “amoral god” that Leggatt will later see in the vision,⁸⁴ a view based upon Sicilius Leonatus’ typically classical call to a “Thunder-master” who will “show thy spite on mortal flies,” and will “With Mars fall out, with Juno chide, that thy adulteries / Rates and Revenges” (5.4.32-34). Rather, Jupiter makes an unusually “clear assertion of purpose”⁸⁵ which, even for a Renaissance play, strongly counters “the usual [modern] critical resistance to intentionalism in the arts;”⁸⁶ indeed, Jupiter’s speech presents Cymbeline’s “central theological message dramatized” and “very directly stated to the audience.”⁸⁷ Despite the lack of merit in the cries of the “petty spirits” (5.4.93) imploring him, despite sinful Posthumus’ kinship with these souls, and though deity seems to have been unable or unwilling to change his harsh fortunes, Jupiter reassures Posthumus that he will one day live content with Imogen. Posthumus’ confusion and suffering can be understood if he realizes this simple but vital truth:

Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift,

The more delay’d, delighted. (5.4.101-02)

Without being theologically explicit, yet with his characteristic verbal wit, Shakespeare here reminds us of the centrality of the cross in Christian life,⁸⁸ for Jupiter’s wisdom can be translated as meaning “that the suffering and sacrifices of love lead eventually to spiritual joy.”⁸⁹ Of course, Cymbeline has already made clear that “this love must be of a higher order than mere physical desire,” and rather now reveals “Providence, or Divine Love in action.”⁹⁰ We are again reminded of the centrality of this theology to Christianity by the apostle John’s teaching that “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his sonne to be a reconciliation for our sinnes” (1 John 4:10). Jewish analogues are just as strong, and Knight insightfully compares Jupiter’s words to the wisdom of Proverbs 3:2: “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be wearied of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”⁹¹ The likeness of idea between such passages, and the likelihood of Shakespeare intending us to see these connections, is strengthened even further by the fact that

Jupiter's words are closely echoed in the final act of The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune, a probable source of Cymbeline which similarly leaves us "assured" that "The Lord Loveth whom he chasteneth" (Heb. 12: 6).⁹²

Thus Knight is probably right to argue that "we may practically equate Shakespeare's Jove with Jehovah," and to see in the theophany a "precise anthropomorphic expression of that beyond-tragedy recognition felt through the miracles and resurrections" of the romances.⁹³ Certainly we can reject, as a clear example of group bias, Frye's curious claim that despite its Christian contexts, Cymbeline is "not a more religious play than Much Ado," but rather "a more academic play, with a greater technical interest in dramatic structure."⁹⁴ Even Nosworthy acknowledges the need for Cymbeline's dramatic structure to be completed by theological meaning, for the vision of Jupiter "follows upon four and a half acts of bad faith, cruelty, violence, and revenge," and "there is no reason for supposing that this change of fortune is achieved through any human agency"; thus, "we must conclude, if the play is to have any meaning for us, that the resolution of discords is the result of supernatural intervention."⁹⁵ Finally, without going into more detail, it can be here predicted that an accurate perception of the vision, and of its relation to the regeneration of both Posthumus' and Imogen's love and the health of Cymbeline's state, leaves the audience in the same position as the soothsayer, Philarmonus, who (as his name suggests) proclaims harmony at the close of Cymbeline. Earlier Philarmonus had wrongly prophesied of Rome's triumph (4.2. 348-52), and immediately after the theophany Posthumus thinks it "a speaking such as sense cannot untie" (5.4.147-48). Yet by play's end, Philarmonus can interpret the tablet left by Jupiter and show the players, and by implication the broader community of interpreters in the audience, that there is a wondrous "skill in the construction" (5.5.433) of their lives. The action of this play, we might even say, is guided by Jupiter within its internal world, and externally is crafted by Shakespeare, but illuminating both for the audience is ultimately the "light of the world" Who begins to shine amidst all human history during the time Cymbeline depicts.

It is also this play's construction, however, that disallows Cymbeline criticism from focusing solely on the clarity of its Christian conclusion. We must not take as superfluous the carefully planned tragi-comic structure which brings both characters and audience to the depths of despair before revealing truth.⁹⁶ As well, the construction of the play's verse is unusually elliptical, and may be deliberately phrased so as to enhance the confusion and uncertainty that Christians

believed engulfed the pagan world. On the other hand, Cymbeline “probably exceeds any other Shakespearean play in its fecundity of classical, and especially mythological, reference.”⁹⁷ These references are presented in a “peculiarly studied” manner yet also refracted through that free, characteristically Renaissance reworking of classical mythology.⁹⁸ Jupiter, for example, is more than a classical god, but even he must also remain at the level of analogue because “representation of the supreme deity cannot be completely successful (as Milton also found).”⁹⁹ Shakespeare, however, “probably gains rather than loses in Cymbeline by reliance on a semifictional figure, allowing a maximum of dignity with a minimum of risk.”¹⁰⁰ Though we do finally see the “vivid revelation of a kindly Providence behind mortality’s drama,”¹⁰¹ a revelation clearly linked to Christ’s nativity, this should not negate the initial feeling of confusion which even audiences who know the conclusion should share with Cymbeline’s characters. Rather, our experience of Cymbeline’s first four acts should be more like the four weeks of Advent in the Renaissance Anglican church, which focused upon “the terror of Judgment Day” in order “to point the contrast between Christian and pre-Christian views of the end of the world.”¹⁰² For these reasons, one of the best strategies for Cymbeline criticism is given by perhaps its most sensitive pre-twentieth-century critic, Hazlitt, who describes reading the play as being

like going on a journey with some uncertain object at the end of it, and in which the suspense is kept up and heightened by the long intervals between each action. Though the events are scattered over such an extent of surface, and relate to such a variety of characters, yet the links which bind the different interests of the story together are never entirely broken ... The ease and conscious unconcern with which this is effected only makes the skill more wonderful.¹⁰³

That so many critics since Hazlitt fail to appreciate this skill also indicates, however, the need for a scholarly rather than Romantic reading of Cymbeline, one which attempts at least a partial grasp of the meanings that its classical and Christian imagery might have conveyed to a Renaissance audience. Crucial here is Peggy Muñoz Simonds’ Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline: An Iconographic Reconstruction. Like R.M. Frye’s Renaissance Hamlet, Simonds’ work seeks to suggest some potential responses to Cymbeline of a Renaissance audience. While attempting to be aware of the most relevant historical contexts, Simonds focuses upon Renaissance *topoi*, the “conventional imagery and symbolic representations of standard Renaissance themes” as

these “appear in the art of the period,”¹⁰⁴ especially in the art of iconography preserved in emblem books. Simonds herself cautions against too simplistic a transference of meaning from icon to dramatic text,¹⁰⁵ but if the play’s internal contexts are also considered, then her criticism presents invaluable insights into *Cymbeline*’s potential meanings and is an absolute prerequisite for valid evaluation of this rich Renaissance play.

Even critics with a wealth of knowledge on the meaning of classical and Christian culture in the Tudor and Stuart period, however, are at the beginning of *Cymbeline* thrust suddenly into a world of confusion. The First Gentleman gives a fairly clear “explication” of a typically gloomy opening comic scene by saying “You do not meet a man but frowns,” and then the standard romance reason as to why--alienation from the divine--but what does he mean by continuing, “Our bloods / No more obey the heavens than our courtiers’ / Still seem as does the King’s” (1.1.1-3)?¹⁰⁶ Does this mean that the court never obeys the King, or that they always appear to be in the same humour because they are equally alienated? Or is the King alone virtuous? The First Gentleman goes on to explain to the baffled Second Gentleman that Princess Imogen has married one of lower rank, against the wishes of her father and his new wife who had wanted her to marry the new stepmother’s son. A possible explanation of the opening incongruity is then given when we learn that “all is outward sorrow” (1.1.9), but that only the King and Queen are truly saddened by the failure of this match, for no courtier “hath a heart that is not / Glad at the thing they scowl at” (1.1.14); thus, the courtiers’ blood never appears in the same condition as that of the King’s. But is either seeming appearance reflective of the heavens’ will? For the First Gentleman then describes Posthumus by saying that not “So fair an outward and such stuff within / Endows a man but he” (1.1.23-24); does this mean that the outward seeming of the courtiers is not fair and noble? Most troubling, of course, we later learn that the praise of Posthumus is hotwinded hyperbole; might the condemnation of Cloten be equally misguided? Subsequent scenes soon rule out this latter possibility, but nevertheless these “tantalizingly elliptical”¹⁰⁷ opening speeches by the First Gentleman have sufficiently established a world of confusion in which neither human word, action, nor appearance can entirely be trusted. Jachimo’s question haunts: “can we not / Partition make with spectacles so precious / Twixt fair and foul?” (1.6.37-38).

Normally a fundamental Shakespearean virtue is “the ability to be what one seems to be, and to see things as they are.”¹⁰⁸ *Cymbeline*’s court can partially be taken as a standard “antithesis

of this honesty," since the play's first two acts straightforwardly present the treachery of the Queen and Cloten.¹⁰⁹ Yet, since the focus and perhaps the blame of the state shifts to them, how can we judge Cymbeline's own character? After all, it was he who raised Posthumus, the orphaned son of a British hero who had died after two of his sons had died fighting the Romans, and gave him all the learning that would come to any royal (1.1.40-46). Far more disturbingly for the audience, the first two acts unravel the antithesis between appearance and reality in the characters of Posthumus and Imogen, and present the very embodiment of this antithesis in the dissembling Jachimo. Even the ethics of the honest doctor, Cornelius, are cast into doubt since he gives the Queen what she thinks are potentially fatal poisons, although in soliloquy he does reveal that he has actually given only a powerful sleeping potion (1.5.33-44). We also see, before she has any reason to be angry with him, a lonely Imogen talking about missing the banished Posthumus in lines neither pious nor romantic: "O, that husband! My supreme crown of grief, and those repeated / Vexations of it!" (1.6.3-5). Usually, though, we are never in doubt as to which characters are honest, and a number of characters, especially Pisanio, are shown being deceptive for what are clearly good ends. Sometimes, an evil character like the Queen speaks truer than she knows when she talks about the sleeping potion, which she thinks is poison, telling how it "Five times redeem'd from death" and saying, of the substance that will later preserve Imogen in a seeming death, "I do not know / What is more cordial" (1.5.63-64). The ruling principle, as is typical of the romances, is that "all things work together for the best unto them that love God" (Rom. 8: 28), but it is difficult for both characters and audience to remind themselves of this truth. Particularly, the gap between what we are told about Posthumus and what he does, and between what Imogen is and what Jachimo cunningly presents her to be, creates a world of extreme, painful incongruity. Even Imogen's judgments do not always see this world as it is; is it true that Posthumus' "virtue / By her election may be truly read" (1.1.52-53)? Certainly, though, it is Imogen's virtue alone which allows us to hope to meet the lost princes, the "strange" almost laughably romantic story that the First Gentleman also introduces and thus suggests that we will hear more of one day (1.1.57-64).

We seem to be in a fairy tale world in which virtue can see through vice when Imogen immediately recognizes the Queen's supposed aid as "Dissembling courtesy!" (1.1.84), and in which she and Posthumus profess parting words of pure love (1.1.85-101). Yet it is also the Queen who here calls Cymbeline to that central romance virtue, "patience" (1.2.154), and she

supports Pisanio, Posthumus' servant, remaining behind and helping Imogen (1.2.158-179). Such scenes, as Claire Bloom has shown,¹¹⁰ can almost make the stepmother seem beguiling real, or at least a remarkably skilled actress. Certainly the corrupt court does not, as many critics have wrongly claimed, move towards the ideal of pastoralism, despite Imogen's wish to be a "A neat-herd's daughter, and my Leonatus / Our neighbor shepherd's son!" (1.2.149-150). Rather, we get many echoes of the primitivism--a fundamentally different landscape which this play fully shifts to when it moves to Wales¹¹¹--of the opening of King Lear, such as Cymbeline's blind anger (1.1.124, 132), Pisanio's Kent-like loyalty, and the unsettling way in which Posthumus and Imogen also seem to quantify love through eloquence, to show "how much" they love each other through words. Unlike Lear they express this humbly rather than arrogantly, he telling her that "I my poor self did exchange for you, / To your so infinite loss" (1.2.119-120), she saying that he "overbuys me / Almost the sum he pays" (1.2.146-147); but, the fundamental error may be the same. Certainly there are more disturbing echoes of Lear in these lovers' similar status as "prisoners" (1.1.72, 123) whom the state will "pen... up" (Cym. 1.1.153) as it did Lear and Cordelia. Both plays turn tragic because of letters that kill and messages that fail to reach their mark, as Imogen reminds us in the following scene by imploring Pisanio to wait at the harbour for every letter; if he writes and "I not have it," she says, "'twere a paper lost / As offer'd mercy is" (1.3.3-4), another elliptical comparison which could mean that the letter is "as precious as pardon to a condemned man," or is lost as sadly "as God's mercy to a sinner."¹¹² This scene then provides other images of the earlier tragedies, Pisanio reporting how in parting Posthumus waved and kissed his handkerchief, the "ocular proof" of jealousy in Othello (3.3.360). As well, Imogen's final call for him to "encounter me with orisons" (1.3.32) during their enforced absence, and the image of her "parting kiss" being interrupted by the "tyrannous breathing" of her father (1.3.36), certainly recall the tragic relationship of Ophelia and Hamlet. Finally, the "diminution / Of Space" which turns the departing Posthumus from a crow to a gnat to air, until Imogen "turn'd [her] eye and wept" (1.3.18-22), also recalls Edgar's description of the Dover straits and the image of the blind Gloucester weeping.¹¹³ Subtly, skillfully, Shakespeare introduces into this romantic world the atmosphere of darkest tragedy.

A.C. Bradley argues that Posthumus and Jachimo "fail to reach tragic dimensions,"¹¹⁴ but while the former certainly lacks the epic stature of a Hamlet or Lear, he does display some of the

nobility, and many of the fatal flaws, that are characteristic of a tragic hero. Even in pledging his parting love, for example, Posthumus gives a bracelet or “manacle of love” to his “favourite prisoner” (1.1.122-23), and the contrast between this gift and the diamond given him by Imogen is perhaps an early sign of that possessive love which will cause him later to treat her virtue as an object to be wagered.¹¹⁵ Yet Imogen confers nobility upon Posthumus by likening him to the iconographic king of the birds, proudly defending her marital decision by saying, “I chose an eagle, / And did avoid a puttock” (1.1.139-40). The iconography here seems straightforward, Cloten being likened to the kite which symbolized “greed, cowardice, and deceit,”¹¹⁶ while Posthumus is compared to a soaring bird of great dignity. Simonds points out, though, that “the three traditional meanings of the eagle during the Renaissance were keen vision, royalty, and the ability to gaze directly into the sun,” qualities which Posthumus either does not seem to have or in which he has no special distinction.¹¹⁷ For example, we learn from the Frenchman in 1.4 that there are “many” who “could behold the sun with as firm eyes as he” (1.4.13-14). Yet subsequent events and imagery will link Posthumus to the eagle in these three areas, and more particularly to the Renaissance reading by Physiologus of Psalm 103’s promise: “thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 103:5). As Simonds more broadly explains, “the general pattern of decline into sin, the fall, and the ultimate renewal described in this eagle myth is roughly analogous to the pattern of Posthumus’ life in the play.”¹¹⁸

1.4 presents the crucial moment of this decline, almost allegorically setting “the romantic and puritanical idealism” of “the Britain” (1.4.28) Posthumus, against “the license of the Continent,”¹¹⁹ as represented by characters named Frenchman, Dutchman, Spaniard, and, most especially, the two Italians named Philario and Jachimo. This second Italian is far more dangerous than the first, but both begin the sifting of Posthumus’ character. Philario plants doubt through an ambiguous compliment, saying that Posthumus has changed since they last met, now having “that which makes him both / without and within” (1.4.9-10). Jachimo more directly questions whether the marriage to Imogen “words” Posthumus “a great deal from the matter” (1.4.16-17), that is, makes him appear far better than he truly is.¹²⁰ What makes Posthumus truly tragic, though, is that he does possess many of the qualities of the noble romantic hero; he already has braved evil authorities to enter into holy marriage with Imogen, and initially he is completely committed to her. Rather, like many classical tragic heroes, it is the very excess of his own good qualities which

entraps Posthumus. He readily engages in bragging against the other nations "in praise of our country mistresses" (1.4.57-58), and when the idea of anyone stealing Imogen's virtue is suggested (1.4.90-93), he is so certain of his beloved's honour that he confidently replies: "Your Italy contains none so accomplish'd a courtier to convince the honour of my mistress" (1.4.94-95). If Imogen is as honest as he knows she is, and she is, then the risk posed by Jachimo's wager of ten thousand ducats against her chastity seems simply a sure way to increase one's wealth while also setting straight a crooked villain. Posthumus has, in fact, been defended as a blameless hero whose acceptance of the bribe showed the medieval belief that "a virtue exaggerated... [is] a virtue magnified."¹²¹ Yet surely this argument forgets the medieval virtue of prudence, and Simonds demonstrates through iconography that the Renaissance saw in excessive praise of anyone's virtue a dangerous tendency to evoke jealous, malicious response.¹²² Posthumus forgets this, perhaps because he himself is so blunt and straightforward that he simply ignores the possibility of Jachimo returning with a false report. Posthumus says, "if you make your voyage upon her and give me directly to understand you have prevail'd" (1.4.158-59) then Imogen "is not worth our debate." But why should he expect to be given direct understanding? In so fully asserting and embodying the characteristically British values of bluntness and honesty, Posthumus forgets that in Rome he is speaking to what Renaissance England would have typically expected to be a subtle Italian villain, one whose sly eloquence, as his name suggests, surely recalls the devil called Iago who through jealousy drove another nobleman, Othello, to the pains of hell.

Jachimo does not evoke the terror of his dramatic ancestor; yet, it is a mistake to see him simply as a lesser version of Iago. Rather, Jachimo shares many of his predecessor's characteristic traits and techniques for creating evil, but his different circumstances create a unique atmosphere of evil. His motive, the wager, is more obvious than Iago's, but lacking an Emilia or any close personal relationship to the couple, Jachimo has even less anxiety or personal inhibition. Once he sets upon his course, saying, "Boldness be my friend; / Arm me audacity from head to foot" (1.6.19-20), Jachimo's courageously singleminded devotion makes for an acting role even more likely to evoke an oblique aura of "motiveless malignity."¹²³ Very smoothly, he arrives to meet Imogen with a letter of introduction from Posthumus. Very gradually, like Iago, he tries to move Imogen towards jealousy by vaguely speaking about the need for her to take vengeance, then pretending that it is not his place to speak of such things (1.6.90-93). When she plainly says, "Let

me hear no more," he then details why she should take revenge, and how he would render "service" to help in the revenge (1.6.118-140). At this point Imogen suddenly mistrusts him, as Othello did Iago (3.3.359), and Jachimo is similarly quick to turn his entire approach into a supposed test of Imogen's own good will, quickly regaining her trust and smoothly, shockingly, causing her to say that the device of his next scheme, the trunk, will be "very welcome" (1.6.210) right in her very bedchamber! Once he returns to Posthumus, Jachimo is every bit as persuasive as Iago ever was, first describing the bedchamber, then presenting, as his final "ocular proof" (*Oth.* 3.3.360), the bracelet he has slipped from the sleeping Imogen's wrist (2.4.95). This convinces Posthumus to give over his ring, but Pisanio argues that the bracelet might have been lost or stolen, and momentarily Posthumus demands his ring back and asks for "some corporal sign" (2.4.106-118). Jachimo then provides a sensual detail that not even Iago laid eyes upon, telling him of the mole under Imogen's breast and claiming to have "kiss'd it" (2.4.135-37). Posthumus, completely convinced, roars into a mad, murderous rage.

Posthumus' misreading of signs here is a classically medieval, Augustinian example of *cupiditas* triumphing over *caritas*, and of an interpreter failing to consider the intentions of another speaker.¹²⁴ Conversely, it is also worth noting here that Imogen's immediate mistrust of Jachimo arises from a typically medieval and Renaissance awareness that storytelling is ethical, and has ends or purposes;¹²⁵ thus she rebukes him: "If thou wert honorable, / Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not / For such an end thou seek'st--as base as strange" (1.6.142-44). While this knowledge prevents Imogen, unlike Othello or Posthumus, from being consciously deceived and entrapped in the basest of ways, it is the very strangeness of Jachimo's mentality that makes her initially incapable of seeing him for what he is. Imogen knows, for example, the value of fidelity to truth regardless of one's state in life, saying in her loneliness, "Blessed be those, / How mean soe'er, that have their honest wills, / Which seasons comfort" (1.6.7-9). To Iago or Jachimo, by contrast, virtue is "a fig!" (*Oth.* 1.3.319), and "the power and corrigible authority" for our actions "lies in our wills" (*Oth.* 1.3.325-26), not in some external standard of truth. When he first meets Imogen, Jachimo babbles incoherently, musing on whether admiration of Imogen's beauty would call forth "sluttery" (1.6.44), then answers Imogen's confused question, "What's the matter, trow," with this searing image of his own will: "The cloyed will -- / That satiate yet unsatisfied desire, that tub / Both fill'd and running -- ravening first the lamb, / Longs after for the garbage"

(1.6.47-49). Still confused, Imogen can only reply, "What, dear sir, / Thus raps you?" (1.6.50-51), for she understands no more of an uncontrollable will than she does of the obsessive sexuality that precedes it. Iago and Jachimo share this obsession, however, and their oft noted tendency to "react skeptically to idealism" and to try to destroy "anything that contradicts" their "cynical view of the world,"¹²⁶ is nowhere more evident than in their shared battle to reduce the spiritual meaning of marriage to a physical lust that would make humanity indistinguishable from the "monkeys" about which both Jachimo (1.6.39) and Iago (3.3.403) rant.

Cymbeline's preeminent concern with the opposition of spiritual love and sexual lust is further developed by Shakespeare's skillful intermingling of scenes showing two more assaults upon "the walls of [Imogen's] dear honour" (2.1.63), one the straightforward courtship of the blunt fool Cloten, the other the dark entrance of Jachimo, hidden in the trunk, into Imogen's bedchamber. Both assaults include ironic juxtaposition, however, for though we see Cloten speaking in all his bawdy baseness (2.1.21-22), he woos Imogen with musicians who play an "aubade," a call to arise in the morning which here begins, "Hark, hark the lark at heaven's gate sings" (2.3.20). This is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful songs in Shakespeare's plays, but Cloten's only criterion for the song's value is his thrice repeated hope that it will "penetrate" Imogen (2.3.12, 13, 27), a term which shows that his own ability to hear this hymn to her beauty is marred by a heart filled with lust.

For his part, Jachimo delivers a sensual, aesthetic description of Imogen sleeping in her bedchamber. Many of his words are intended to evoke the spectre of sexual assault upon innocent chastity. Likening himself to Tarquin (3.2.12), the cruel rapist whom Shakespeare had written about in The Rape of Lucrece, Jachimo notes that Imogen "hath been reading" the "tale of Tereus" (2.2.44-45). Jachimo thus invites us to see Imogen "as the beautiful virgin Philomela" who after being brutally mutilated (in the Ovidian story that Shakespeare had used extensively in Titus Andronicus)¹²⁷ became the nightingale, the "poetic bird of sorrow."¹²⁸ Like the aubade, the nightingale signals the "dawning" of day, and may "bare the raven's eye" (2.2.49). Jachimo, aptly, "appears to ally his own wicked personality with" the raven because it is a bird of prey and one which "carries tales" in Ovid's story of Coronis.¹²⁹ This imagery, and Jachimo's bawdy desires to "touch" or steal "one kiss" from this "fresh lily" (2.2.15-17), thus sets a scene in which even Jachimo must "lodge in fear" for, as he concludes, though Imogen is "a heavenly angel, hell

is here" (2.2.49-50).

However, when Jachimo describes Imogen's bedchamber to Posthumus upon his return to Rome, what he describes actually shows that the bedchamber was modelled after elaborate iconographic rooms known to exist during the Renaissance, rooms "designed to represent" a "Temple of Graces," "a suitable resting place for Beauty, or the third Grace, in the form of Princess Imogen."¹³⁰ The tapestry showing where Cleopatra "met her Roman" (2.4.70), which Jachimo cites to liken himself to Antony, sounds purely classical. However, "the Christian significance of the Antony and Cleopatra story" was "well known,"¹³¹ and alluded to in Shakespeare's own play when Octavius Caesar prophesies that "The time of universal peace is near" (*Ant.* 4.6.4). This peace occurs during the age of Cymbeline, and its coming is suggested by the "golden cherubins" that are "fretted" on the ceiling of Imogen's bedchamber, "a visual allusion to the unheard harmony of the universe and of the approaching Nativity of Christ."¹³² Further, in contrast to his earlier description of Imogen as "Cytherea" (2.2.14), or Venus the goddess of love, the chimney piece in Imogen's chamber is actually "Chaste Dian bathing" (2.4.81-82), a far more accurate image of Imogen's character. That her chastity exists within marriage is also represented by her andirons, the ornaments at the edge of the fireplace, which are "two winking Cupids" who, to a Renaissance audience, probably represent Eros, erotic love, being tamed by the mutual, married love of Anteros.¹³³ With Diana above and the two Cupid andirons below the fireplace, one should see "a visual oxymoron of chaste passion,"¹³⁴ "hot ice and wondrous strange snow" (*MND* 5.1.59), an image of the "reconciliation of opposites that can be achieved in marriage."¹³⁵ Seeing all this through Jachimo's lustful gaze, however, Posthumus can only see a woman he believes "hath been colted" (2.4.134) or ridden sexually, when actually it is he who has been colted, in the sense of "befooled."¹³⁶

This deception is the culmination of the ongoing attempt by *Cymbeline*'s evil characters not only to spur Imogen and Posthumus to infidelity, but also to reduce the full religious significance of their married love to a base contract of sexual lust. Their fundamental marital unity is founded on prayer, for during their separation Imogen has "charg'd" Posthumus, "At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight, / T' encounter me with orisons, for then / I am in heaven for him" (1.3.30-33). The at least potentially Christian character of this marriage is also subtly suggested through the repeated references to Imogen's "election" of Posthumus (1.1.53; 1.6.175), which (since she

is a royal) can be understood by a Renaissance audience as the divine will directly giving her a marriage partner. The specifically Christian sense of election (cf. Rom. 9.11) is ironically referred to when the Second Lord, in an aside mocking Cloten, says, "If it be a sin to make a true / election, she is damn'd" (1.2.27-28). Later, Cloten mocks the religious validity and chastity of Imogen's marriage by telling her: "The contract you pretend with that base wretch, / One bred of alms and foster'd with cold dishes, / With scraps o' th' court, it is no contract, none" (2.3.113-15).

Unlike Cloten, Posthumus understands that the foundation of marriage is the sanction of Divinity, as is shown when he tells Jachimo that Imogen "is not a thing for / sale, and only the gift of the gods" (1.4.84-85). However, Posthumus forgets the priceless value of his ring, and the necessity of his marriage being his primary earthly covenant. In lines full of dramatic irony that signal the breaking of marital vows, Posthumus proposes to Jachimo, "Let there be covenants drawn between's" (1.4.143); after clarifying the wage, Jachimo agrees by saying, "Your hand--a covenant" (1.4.164). Upon returning from England, Jachimo will again remind Posthumus of their "covenant" (1.4.50), but what Posthumus should remember is the holy covenant of marriage that already exists between him and Imogen. By forgetting, and bonding with Jachimo, Posthumus turns this play towards tragedy in a manner ominously similar to the turning point of *Othello*, when Iago becomes Othello's lieutenant in a bond that only the latter realizes will last "for ever" (3.3.480).

Posthumus' rapid shift suggests that the answer to the question which Jachimo asks Imogen while offering to commit adultery with her, his desire "to know if your affiance / Were deeply rooted (1.6.163-64), is that Posthumus' and Imogen's marriage is immature, or possibly lacks the light of a full understanding of Christian truth. To a Christian audience, Jachimo's testing of the lovers' inner conviction might recall St. Paul's prayer that "by his Spirit in the inner man ... Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" and make one, or in the case of marriage two who have become one, "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3: 16-18). Immediately after testing Imogen, Jachimo flatters and appeases her by saying that Posthumus "sits 'mongst men like a descended god" (1.6.169). This idolatrous attitude to one's spouse is also implied when Posthumus tells Jachimo that Imogen is his wife, not his mistress--which Elizabethans often referred to as a "friend"¹³⁷--by saying, "I profess myself her / adorer, not her friend" (1.5.65-66); adoration is a kind of worship due only to deity. The failure, then, to refer fully the validity of

their marriage to a transcendent deity may contribute to the inability of Posthumus and Imogen to defend their marriage against those in the play who attack them. Later, however, the grace of God is given Posthumus and Imogen when Jupiter promises to restore and bless their union as husband and wife (5.4.107). As with Diana and Marina, so with Imogen there is also a remarkable grace in the victory of her faith over the deceit of Jachimo, and through Imogen we see again the value of a commitment to chastity, particularly “married chastity, that larger virtue.”¹³⁸

Therefore, while the essential unity of marriage entails speaking of a single couple, there can be no question that by far the majority of the blame for Imogen’s problems lies with Posthumus. Easily the lowest moment of their marriage comes in the disturbed, ranting soliloquy he delivers after being convinced by Jachimo that Imogen is adulterous. Posthumus’ misogyny is so venomous that his conception of “the woman’s part” (2.5.20) became the title of a pioneering anthology of feminist Shakespearean criticism.¹³⁹ The entire list of sins that Posthumus attributes to the woman’s part--“lying ... flattering ... deceiving ... Lust and rank thoughts ... revenges ... Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain, / Nice longing, slanders, mutability” (2.5.22-26)--have, between Posthumus and Jachimo, most obviously been committed by men. As in the other romances, so *Cymbeline* reaches its low point in the enraged despair of the male hero; at the same time, the heroine works to achieve the regeneration of both her family and her society. Although, as in Shakespeare’s early comedies, Imogen now disguises herself as a man to achieve this end, the name she takes, “Fidele,” makes clear the essentially religious role of her part as she seeks to preserve their marriage from the “very devils” that “plague” both her and, especially, her beloved but sadly perverted husband (2.5.35).

Shakespeare eases the pangs of this emotional low point by advancing the plot with scenes introducing the Roman conflict (3.1), and the lost princes living in Wales (3.3). Pisanio receives a letter from Posthumus telling him to kill Imogen, and a false letter for Imogen expressing love and inviting her to meet her husband in Wales (3.2.1-19; 40-47). Even for Shakespeare, this is a particularly obvious example of how the “letter killeth” (2 Cor. 3.6.), and so Pisanio curses the letters as “damned paper” (3.2.19). Only once in Wales does he show Imogen the false letter, lamenting after she reads that “the paper / Hath cut her throat already” (3.4.32-33). The fundamentally religious character of the breach of faith between Posthumus and Imogen is then again emphasized when she responds,

The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,
 All turn'd to heresy? Away, away,
 Corrupters of my faith! you shall no more
 Be stomachers to my heart. Thus may poor fools
 Believe false teachers. (3.4.81-85)

While, as Simonds suggests, “the religious terminology in these lines” may refer to the Reformed church founded on faith alone, she does “not insist on the accuracy of this reading.”¹⁴⁰ It must be remembered that Imogen and Posthumus usually carry concurrent references to classical Britain and to contemporary Christian England. Upon being told the truth by Pisanio, for example, Imogen both wants to commit suicide like the classical Lucrece, and sounds like Hamlet in saying, “Against self-slaughter / There is a prohibition so divine / That cravens my weak hand” (3.4.76-77). As well, any opposition between Imogen and Roman Catholicism must also account for the fact that her life is preserved while she is disguised as a page to the Roman ambassador Lucius, whom honest Pisanio describes as “honorable, / And doubling that, most holy” (3.4.176-77). Clearer geographical religious significance should be focused, perhaps, upon the place Fidele first escapes to, Milford Haven. After Pisanio gives Imogen the false letter, her ensuing speech exults in “blessed Milford,” and she wonders “how Wales was made so happy as / T' inherit such a haven” (3.2.59-61). As already noted, Milford Haven held particular religious significance for the Tudors since it was the place where Richmond had landed when he returned to defeat Richard III. Kökeritz extends its importance by arguing that Imogen’s adjective “blessed” here echoes the first part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 1-11); this claim might seem farfetched except that “haven” and “heaven” were homonyms in Elizabethan English.¹⁴¹ Yet these connotations make Imogen’s desire to rush to Milford and meet her supposedly loving husband even more incongruous, for Shakespeare has Imogen speak of “one that rode to’s execution” and of “riding wagers” (3.2.70-71). For now, thankfully these incongruities are known only to the audience, and are part of “a fog” that Imogen admits she “cannot look through” (3.2.79-80). Yet Imogen also speaks truer than she knows by concluding, “Accessible is none but Milford way” (3.2.82). Each of the play’s principle characters will pass through Wales,¹⁴² which as a place of either refuge or destruction does become an analogue of the judgement preceding heaven or hell, a place where the characters are given either the wages of sin or the gift of God, either death or life (Cf. Rom. 6:

23; Deut. 30: 19).

The characters already living in Milford Haven, Belarius and the two lost princes, are often taken as pastoral contrasts to "the intrigues and artificial refinements of the court," and as analogues to "Duke Senior's community of political outlaws in *As You Like It* who sing a religious piety."¹⁴ A starving Imogen, like Orlando first arriving in Arden (*AYL* 2.7), stumbles upon their empty cave and immediately eats, planning to pay later. Guiderius, though, rhetorically asks, "Money, youth?" (3.6.53), while Arviragus then makes clear their reversal of the court's economic priorities by saying, "All gold and silver rather turn to dirt, / As 'tis no better reckon'd, but of those / Who worship dirty gods" (3.6.53-54). The kind of gods who are the foundation of their religious country home outside Milford Haven has already been made clear by the opening speech of Belarius introducing the cave where he has raised the lost princes; "boys," he says, "this gate"

Instructs you how t' adore the heavens, and bows you
To a morning's holy office. The gates of monarchs
Are arch'd so high that giants may jet through
And keep their impious turbands on without
Good morrow to the sun. Hail, thou fair heaven!
We house i' th' rock, yet use thee not so hardly
As prouder livers do. (3.3.2-8)

Simonds, however, contrasts pastoralism to the iconography of primitivism, which though it similarly "portrays the savage life as virtuous and instructive in contrast to life in a depraved court,"¹⁴ also presents "wild men" such as these Welsh cave dwellers. They were originally taken to be "lawless figure[s] like Caliban" and were used as religious symbols in churches, where they would often be put "on the stems of Baptismal fonts," together with uncrowned lions, "to represent that aspect of fallen nature that must be overcome and controlled by the word of God."¹⁵ Thus, though both Guiderius and Arviragus dutifully reply "Hail, heaven!" (3.3.8-9) to their foster father's opening speech, the conflict between their desire for experience and Belarius' fear of the vice of the court must be resolved in the boys' favour, because "for their own salvation" they must "be removed from the cave of ignorance" (called a "prison" (3.3.34) by Guiderius in a likely Platonic allusion).¹⁶ Yet early Renaissance culture commonly accepted the concept of the "noble savage,"¹⁷ and during the Renaissance both non-Calvinist orthodox Christianity (cf. Rom. 1: 19-

20) and Christian neoplatonism allowed for far more natural virtue than in those persons trapped in Plato's original allegory of the cave.¹⁴⁸ To some extent, the virtue of *Cymbeline*'s wild boys thus challenges courtly authority, especially when contrasted with Cloten. Shakespeare makes them central to "the redemption of Cymbeline's entire kingdom."¹⁴⁹ In later Renaissance cultural history, "wild men" did come to be seen as "positive heraldic figure[s] who could be trusted to maintain law and order."¹⁵⁰ At the same time, however, Shakespeare never lets his audience forget that these wild boys are also lost princes, whose royal "sparks of nature" (3.3.79) make them intuitively wish to return to the court. They both possess typically royal virtues, with Guiderius, or "Polydore," the more active, "best woodman" whose skill in hunting makes him "master of the feast" (3.6.28-29). By contrast, Arviragus, or "Cadwal," is gifted with eloquence and seems almost a pastoral poet. The talents of both princes soon become useful when they meet their long lost and now also disguised sister, Imogen.

As she wanders in the wilderness near their home, Imogen herself learns, in a less extreme though analogous fashion as does Lear, to sympathize with the poor (3.6.9-12), and to realize some of the benefits of experiencing suffering; in soliloquy, she reflects: "Plenty and peace breeds cowards; hardness ever / Of hardness is mother" (3.6.21-22). After their hospitable greeting, Imogen also recognizes the natural virtue inherent in the wild boys, comparing them to "great men" who "had the virtue / Which their own conscience seal'd them, laying by / That nothing-gift of differing multitudes" (3.6.81-85). For their part, the wild Welshmen see in Imogen a divine presence that also reflects her royal stature. Seeing her inside their cave, Belarius greets her as "an angel! or if not, / An earthly paragon! Behold divineness / No elder than a boy!" (3.6.43-45); this greeting perhaps suggests the reversal of Platonism also implied by the opening of the gospel of John, in which light comes down into the darkness of the world (John 1: 4-5). Arviragus, meanwhile, foreshadows Christian ethics in classical eloquence, a belief central to Christians ranging from St. Augustine to Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus,¹⁵¹ by greeting Imogen with the simple words, "He is a man, I'll love him as my brother" (3.7.44). Such allusions are not at all improbable, given how Pisanio has suggested divine support for Imogen, telling her, "May the gods / Direct you to the best!" and then later praying, "Flow, flow, / You heavenly blessings, on her!" (3.5.160-61). Imogen herself might unconsciously be finding Judaeo-Christian iconography in nature when she sees that "imperious seas breeds monsters," as in Job (41:1), while in "poor

tributary rivers" are "sweet fish" (4.2.35-36), a traditional symbol identifying Christians. Even more significantly, Imogen has previously called herself "Th' elected deer" (3.4.111), a phrase which can refer to Christ as the quarry of man's desire.¹⁵² Yet though Imogen embodies self-sacrificing love, we cannot see her only as "a type or personification of Christ,"¹⁵³ for Shakespeare never allows us to forget that she is a woman. Manly Guiderius contrasts her with his brother by saying, "Were you a woman, youth, / I should woo hard but be your groom in honesty: I bid for you as I do buy" (3.6.68-69). It is perhaps more profitable, since the deer is also "a symbol of the human soul pursued by God," to see in Imogen the medieval iconographic figure of "the driven soul" as a "harried stag" pursued by the vices of wrath and jealousy (Posthumus), envy and greed (Jachimo), and vanity and lust (Cloten).¹⁵⁴ The latter of these vices directly confronts Imogen in the wilderness, and most clearly illustrates how the primitive world of Wales succeeds in reversing, indeed turning upside-down the courtly world in which, as in *King Lear*, "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide" (*Lr.* 1.2.106-07).

Or, in the case of Cloten, we might rather say that the courtly world is turned inside-out, for the reversal of his life is explicitly presented through the imagery of changed clothing. We are prepared for this motif by 2.3, where Imogen rebukes Cloten. Ironically, Imogen foreshadows the single most memorable scene of this play by telling Cloten that Posthumus' "mean'st garment" is "dearer / In my respect than all the hairs above thee, / Were they all made such men" (134-36); then, four times before the end of the scene, an incredulous Cloten rhetorically demands, "His garments?" (2.4.136-155). Imogen's insult still rankles Cloten two acts later, when he demands that Pisanio give him some of Posthumus' clothes (3.5.133-136). In 4.1, Cloten sets out, brashly confident that he will rape Imogen and murder her husband, proclaiming:

What mortality is! Posthumus, thy head,
which now is growing upon thy shoulders, shall within
this hour be off, thy mistress enforc'd, thy garments
cut to pieces before [her] face: (4.1.15-18)

As in most of his pronouncements, Cloten here sounds like an armed, court-sponsored, lustier version of Malvolio, but no more dangerous in his clothing than the would-be "Count" was in yellow stockings (*TN* 3.4). Rather, what Cloten has just presented is the "very [opposite] description" of what will happen at the "meeting-place" in Wales (4.1.24). This is no surprise, yet

still this scene allows Shakespeare to present numerous angles of intricate irony, from the very obvious self-ridicule of Cloten, such as him calling Guiderius “a robber” and “a thief” (4.2.76, 86) while himself wearing stolen clothes,¹⁵⁵ to the more intricate paralleling of Cloten and Posthumus that some see throughout the play. Both are stepsons to the king, both woo Imogen, and both are losing gamblers who react to sexual humiliation by violently attacking Imogen.¹⁵⁶ Posthumus assumes Cloten’s values while Cloten wears Posthumus’ clothes, though the two are never on stage together and may even have been played by a single actor.¹⁵⁷ This theatrical choice would enhance even further the question of whether the “clothes make the man,” a question implicit in the clothing motif. Imogen earlier has called herself “a garment out of fashion” who, because “richer than to hang by th’ walls,” must “be ripp’d” (3.4.51-53). Simonds links this line to Ovid’s tale of the flaying of Marsyas,¹⁵⁸ but an alternative source may again be Lear’s rejection of “Robes and furr’d gowns” (4.6.164). Certainly it is the emptiness of court virtue that is stressed when Cloten actually fights Guiderius, a crucial turning point in which the true prince kills the false pretender and begins the “comic process of clearing away false images.”¹⁵⁹ “Know’st me not by my clothes?” Cloten nonsensically demands, to which Guiderius satirically responds, “No, nor thy tailor, rascal” (4.2.82). Speaking as swiftly, he then decapitates Cloten and literally cuts the foundation out from any notion that virtue depends on appearance and social rank. Uncivil though he is, Guiderius recognizes that the natural (but presently obscured) law allows him--in self-defence against an “an arrogant piece of flesh” who would “play threat us, / Play judge and executioner all himself” (4.2.127-28)--to kill even a court appointed prince. Courageous as he is, Guiderius knows that “reverence” and “fears” are due only to the “wise,” saying, “at fools I laugh” (4.2.96). Thus, his very confidence, and Cloten’s hollow foolishness, prevent this act from seeming heroic: “Not Hercules / Could have knock’d out his brains, for he had none” (4.2.114-15). Hardly worth proper burial, Cloten’s “clotpoll” will be sent “down the stream / In embassy to his mother,” while “his body’s hostage / For his return” (4.2.185-86).

This final phrase, though, is highly curious; how could Cloten return? What good as a hostage would his body be if the Queen already knows it is without a head? Even more immediately puzzling, at this moment “solemn music” is called for by the stage directions (4.2.186), which in Shakespeare’s romances usually signals a joyous moment of new life. In a somewhat obscure allegory, Simonds links this moment to Ovid’s story of Orpheus, a tragi-comic

story of music reviving the dead. Music might first commemorate tragedy, however, and here the “ingenious instrument” which Cadwal has set to playing offstage has not been heard since the death of the boys’ mother (4.2.189-91). Still, with Guiderius, audiences are likely to wonder about the cause of the music and ask, “The matter? / Triumphs for nothing, and lamenting toys, / Is jollity for apes, and grief for boys. / Is Cadwal mad?” (4.2.192-94). In response, Arviragus then appears with Imogen in his arms, announcing “The bird is dead / That we have made so much on” (4.2.197-98); again, this moment recalls Lear carrying in Cordelia, lamenting that “a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,” but her “no breath at all” (5.3.307-08). The audience of *Cymbeline* remembers from Cornelius’ words in 1.5 that the potion Imogen has drunk will only make her sleep, not die, but this information is three long acts ago. In the meantime, Pisanio has been tricked into accepting the potion from the queen--whom he as much as Cornelius should have known not to trust--and more recently we have seen the Queen exulting over her success in passing a deadly potion to him (3.5.56-65), and hoping that “despair hath seiz’d” Imogen and will kill her (3.5.60). As well, alone in the wilderness Imogen truly was heartsick, and earlier she had rhetorically asked Pisanio, “in my life what comfort, when I am / Dead to my husband? (3.4.129-130). Perhaps, as Belarius tells us (4.2.208), the true cause of her death has been melancholy.

Cloten’s death shows how suddenly life can be lost. When he is laid in the same grave as Imogen, even Guiderius meditates that “Thersites’ body is as good as Ajax” (4.2.253). This shared grave thus embodies the Medieval and Renaissance emphasis on death as the great leveller, the principle that always reminded Christians that “mean and mighty, rotting / Together, have one dust” (4.2.246-47). The princes also add a touch of classical religion by pointing Imogen’s “head to th’ east,” a pagan burial practice¹⁶⁰ for which, they note, “their father hath a reason” (4.2.254-56). The princes then sing a funeral dirge which, like the aubade earlier, has been much admired for its beauty, but which is similarly incongruous with what we know or, perhaps, momentarily only hope to be true. As a concluding set piece, this song pitches the tone of classical stoicism so memorably, though, that it is even quoted in Beckett’s bleak twentieth-century play *Happy Days*.¹⁶¹

However, *Cymbeline* ends very differently from classical stoic or modern absurdist drama, and the moments that immediately follow the funeral dirge--the so called “headless man” (4.2.308) scene in which Imogen awakes beside Cloten and mistakes him for Posthumus--are clearly another turning point. Initially, many critics find the scene itself the most incongruous aspect of the entire

play. The doubling of Cloten and Posthumus helps to explain Imogen's mistake, and to some degree detaches the audience from her pain.¹⁶² Yet, is this detachment enough to accept the obvious humour in Imogen's complimentary epitaphs--"His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh, / The brawns of Hercules" (4.2.310-11)--being applied to Cloten? Other critics find Imogen's grief here painfully real and all the more tragic, since we do not know at this point about Posthumus' conversion,¹⁶³ but also often find that her simple pathos contrasts sharply with an overwritten and operatic style.¹⁶⁴ As well, the harshness with which Imogen condemns Pisanio for Posthumus' death (4.2.317-18) is deeply troubling to those who see her as a paragon of virtue. Finally, our entire picture of Imogen's civilized, graceful manners is rudely disturbed when, in the final words of her soliloquy, she says to the headless man, "Give color to my pale cheek with thy blood, / That we the horrid may seem to those / Which chance to find us. O, my lord! my lord!" (4.2.330-32). Imogen grotesquely daubs her own face with Cloten's blood and, as the stage directions indicate, "falls on his body" (4.2.332).

All of these actions are no doubt puzzling, and are certainly intended as a fitting final image for the play's first four acts, which Pisanio aptly sums up by admitting that he "remain[s] / Perplexed in all" (4.3.40-41). Yet he also states that "The heavens still must work" (4.3.41), and one can faintly begin to see divinity working in the dark grave of the headless man scene. For there, we should remember, the "bird" who "is dead" (4.2.198) was earlier called "alone th' Arabian bird" (1.6.17), another name for the phoenix. Widely known for its unique ability to rise out of the death of ashes, during the Renaissance the phoenix often symbolizes, unsurprisingly, "the unique renewal granted to the world by Christ."¹⁶⁵ As the Cambridge Bestiary puts it:

Our Lord Jesus Christ exhibits the character of this bird, who says: "I have the power to lay down my life and to take it up again." If the Phoenix has the power to die and rise again, why, silly man, are you scandalized at the word of God--who is the true Son of God--when he says that he came down from heaven for men and for our salvation, and who filled his wings with the odours of sweetness from the New and Old Testaments, and who offered himself on the altar of the cross to suffer for us and on the third day rise again?¹⁶⁶

If we also remember that it is "Fidele" awaking from sleep and rising out of the grave, we should see this as another of the numerous resurrections in Shakespeare's romances. Imogen's sleep in

the grave plausibly alludes to the image in 1 Corinthians 15 of a "sleep" that will precede being transformed to eternal life. Cymbeline particularly employs the Pauline metaphor of clothes suggested when St. Paul says, in the same passage, that the "perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15: 53). Almost immediately after coming out of the grave, Fidele fully enters "his" planned disguise as page to Lucius, the Roman leader. In announcing "his" identity, Fidele then further employs familiar Pauline and Shakespearean language by saying, "I am nothing" (4.2.367), thus echoing other spiritually enlightened characters such as Richard II (R2 5.4.40-41), Cordelia (Lr. 1.1. 87), Edgar (Lr. 3.3.21), and Paulina (WT 3.2.231), all of whom are in turn based upon the Pauline description of a Christian as one who is "As sorrowing, and yet always rejoicing; as poor, and yet make many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6: 10). The scene then closes with Lucius telling his new page, "wipe thine eyes: / Some falls are means the happier to arise" (4.2.402-03), a clear allusion to the unorthodox but widely held Renaissance conception of the fortunate Fall.¹⁶⁷

Shakespeare also positively presents this belief in Measure for Measure, when Escalus says of Angelo, "Well; heaven forgive him! and forgive us all! / Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall" (2.1.37-38). In this passage, the concept of the fortunate fall is proceeded by that which makes resurrection possible, the pardon offered through particular and universal forgiveness. This pattern might seem absent from the "headless man" scene. Indeed, this pattern is suggested obliquely, without destroying the scene's pagan context. Yet the headless man scene does allude to the atonement in which Christ gave "his life for the ransom of many" (Mark. 10: 45), beginning with the strange phrase that Cloten's "body's hostage / For his return" (4.2.185-86), to Imogen asking "heaven" for "as small a drop of pity / As a wren's eye" (4.2.304-05)-- perhaps alluding to the "one drop" of "Christ's blood" that damned Faustus knows "would save [his] soul" (Faustus 5.1.147-48)-- and finally to Imogen and Cloten being covered in blood that marks them as "horrid" (4.2.331) and thus equally sinful, yet also as washed in the blood of Christ which can "give colour to [the] pale cheek" of those who are dead (4.2.330). Admittedly, all of these allusions tenuously depend on Cymbeline's Christian conclusion. The grotesque-blood sharing is also reminiscent of the primitive hunting ritual called "blooding," in which a hunter acquires the spirit of its victim and "a heightened awareness of the close interrelationship between the hunter and the hunted."¹⁶⁸ Within Cymbeline's suggestive if imprecise iconography, however, we might

say that Imogen as “hunted deer” is here clearly shown not as a type of Christ Himself, but rather as one who, despite all her virtues, has been forced by the strangest and most uncontrollable of circumstances herself to share in the bloody sin of the world. Cymbeline as a whole consistently alludes to the coming of Him who would take away that sin, so while the “headless man” scene is shocking, it can also be seen as “a visual stage emblem of the shocking love union between beauty and the beast that lies at the heart of all human existence and that also lies behind the mystery of the divine incarnation so soon to take place.”¹⁶⁹

What most confirms a Christian reading of the “headless man” scene is the return of Posthumus at the start of 5.1. Cloten has served as a “a parodic surrogate for Posthumus both in life and in death,”¹⁷⁰ but as a “merry” and determined sinner he is unredeemable, and hence Posthumus must return to contribute actively to the atonement begun in Act 4. He returns to the stage alone and wipes his face “with a bloody handkerchief” (5.1. stage direction), an action that obviously includes him in the “bleeding” we have just seen between Cloten and Imogen. Continuing this parallel in his speech, Posthumus now clearly realizes his own sinfulness, and he very explicitly begins to imitate the ethical act which the blood of Christ should inspire; unconditionally, Posthumus forgives both Pisanio and Imogen, even though he still believes his wife guilty of adultery (5.1.5-15). Recalling Christ on the cross, who despite his own pain says to the Father, “Thy will be done” (Matt. 26:45), Posthumus acknowledges the love Divinity must have for one such as Imogen, even if she were as sinful as the world that Christ died for, and hence says, “Gods ... Imogen is your own, do your best wills, / And make me blest to obey (5.1. 7, 16-17). Finally, Posthumus continues this play’s use of the Pauline clothing motif (especially for a Protestant English audience) by exchanging his “Italian weeds” for those of a “British peasant” (5.1.23-24), an act which he understands as one of ethical and spiritual significance; this is done, he concludes, “To shame the guise o’ th’ world” and “begin / The fashion” that will predominate throughout Cymbeline’s final act: “less without and more within” (5.1.32-33).

Posthumus’ new resolve and strength is then immediately shown in 5.2 when he defeats, yet does not kill, Jachimo on the battlefield. 5.3 then follows with more British patriotism as we hear how Posthumus fought alongside Belarius and his sons to save the day for Britain. Yet Posthumus scorns those who would romanticize war and turn it “into rhyme” (5.3.63), and his bravery springs from a stoicism similar to Imogen’s in Acts 3 and 4. Thus, Posthumus is shown

to be just beginning an "arduous penitential process" in which the steps of "sorrow, repentance, and satisfaction" are followed in a manner relevant to both Protestant and Catholic understandings of the meaning of penance.¹⁷¹ Penance then continues in 5.4, where after being captured by the Romans, Posthumus is waiting in jail and, like prisoners such as Richard II or Lear, he bids "Most welcome, bondage," before directly addressing the true, spiritual nature of his confinement, and his real hope for liberation: "My conscience, thou art fetter'd / More than my shanks and wrists. You good gods, give me / The penitent instrument to pick that bolt, / Then free for ever!" (5.4.8-11). Then, again imitating the "instrument" by which the good God Christ freed the whole world, Posthumus offers his own life as a substitutionary sacrifice for what he still believes is the sinful life of Imogen, praying that the "good gods" will

For Imogen's dear life take mine, and though
'Tis not so dear, yet 'tis a life; you coin'd it.
'Tween man and man they weigh not every stamp;
Though light, take pieces for the figure's sake;
You rather, mine being yours; and so, great pow'rs,
If you will take this audit, take this life,
And cancel these cold bonds. O Imogen,
I'll speak to thee in silence. (5.4.22-29)

In sharp contrast to his pathologically imaginative soliloquy against Imogen, when he knew "not where" his own father was when he "was stamp'd," but firmly believed that "Some coiner with his tools / Made me a counterfeit" (2.5.4-6), Posthumus now truly knows that both he and Imogen are children of the Creator and Father of all, a fact that should give the sacrifice of either of their lives immense redeeming value to their common Father. This is precisely the doctrine of Judaeo-Christian atonement, which "signifies the making of God and sinners 'at one' by the offering of a sacrifice."¹⁷² Posthumus' prayer here draws from the Bible not only the substitutionary theory of atonement (Matt. 8: 17), but also the metaphors of commerce (1 Cor. 6: 20) and ransom (Mark 10: 45) that are employed throughout Cymbeline.

Perhaps exhausted by the wide range of his appeal, Posthumus, like Pericles, then falls asleep at a crucial, incongruous moment, and experiences a dream vision. Divinity here appears as Jupiter riding on an eagle, an appropriate image because Posthumus has been identified both with

this God and an Eagle throughout the play (1.2.70-71; 2.4.122; 4.2.311)¹⁷³ Now, after all his trials, we are about to see fulfilled the promise of Psalm 103, which tells us that God

forgiveth all thine iniquitie, & healeth all thine infirmities. Which redemeth thy life from the grave, and crowneth thee with mercie and compassions. Which satisfieth thy mouth with good things: and thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Ps. 103: 2-5)

Isaiah similarly reminds us that "the young men shall faint ... shall stumble and fall," but then, like the Psalmist, immediately promises, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall lift up the wings as the eagles" (Isa. 40: 31). Before Posthumus' long wait is finally over, his family first appears and implores Jove for justice to right the wrongs against their descendant. For the first time, the orphaned Posthumus sees his family; but it does not follow that we should interpret the theophany "either as a revelation of the divine forces in human affairs, or as a revelation of 'the familial matrix that underlies all human experience,'" nor is it true that Jupiter takes no action which decisively effects the conclusion of the play.¹⁷⁴ Rather, Jupiter's message shows that "a skillful and quietly benevolent design is being woven of the action despite all the efforts of human folly to destroy it."¹⁷⁵ Moreover, as Posthumus laments afterwards, his family fades out of his dream as quickly as they had out of his life, and to rely on them would place him among the "poor wretches that depend / On greatness' favor," only to "Wake, and find nothing" (5.4.127-29)--an attitude perfectly in tune with at least part of Christ's teaching on the family (cf. Luke 14: 26). Natural and comforting though their prayers are, Posthumus' family just as naturally omits mention of his sin against Imogen, and seeks to convince Jupiter that "our son is good" and therefore deserving of being relieved of "his miseries" (5.4.85-86). On any consistent theology, therefore, they must be rebuked, but it is the distinctively Christian gift of unmerited grace which lets this God comfort them all by saying, "Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift, / The more delay'd, delighted" (5.4.101-02), and promise that Posthumus and Imogen will be happily reunited. Through this promise the theophany becomes an "expression of God's all-embracing care for men, at every moment of life,"¹⁷⁶ though we never actually see Jupiter acting out this care because to have done so would make faith--"the ground of things which are hoped for, and the evidence of things which are not seen" (Heb. 11: 1)--irrelevant. In *Cymbeline*, as in the Judaeo-Christian tradition generally, the divine will acts indirectly and mysteriously, and in this sense is very different from the classical *deus ex machina* who removes all difficulties.¹⁷⁷

Neither, though, is Cymbeline's God deistic, and Jupiter can be seen positively as playing a number of roles that foreshadow the immanent historical action that will soon begin in the Incarnation: as the planner of life's action, He is "Divine Providence"; as the punisher of evil characters such as the Queen and Cloten He is "Divine Justice"; as He who frees the play's good characters from bondage He is a Divine Liberator (Cf. Luke 4: 18); finally, by His "miraculous descent," he parallels "the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation."¹⁷⁸

Finally, and perhaps most compelling, Jupiter "is so determined to be taken seriously, and to be understood as 'real' in a world of false appearances"¹⁷⁹ that he leaves behind a "tablet" which he directs the Leonati to "lay upon [Posthumus'] breast" (5.4.109). This command likens the tablet to a prophetic book of the Old Testament, in which Jehovah frequently commands his people to remember his teachings and "write them upon the table of your heart" (Prov. 3:3, 7:3). Yet when Posthumus first sees the tablet, he continues the play's Pauline clothing imagery by praying that it not be "a garment / Nobler than that it covers" and "so follow" to be as "good as promise" (5.4.133-37), perhaps alluding to the New Testament hope of "children of the promise" (Gal. 4: 28). Then, after reading the tablet, he likely alludes to St. Paul again by saying,

Tis still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen
Tongue and brain not; either both or nothing,
Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
As sense cannot untie. (5.4.145-48)

Like Bottom (MND 4.1.200-219), but responding in the manner dictated by his more serious nature and experience, Posthumus has had a dream of "things which eye hath, neither eare hath heard... which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2: 9). To the "natural" senses of Posthumus these "things of the Spirit of God ... are foolishness," the speaking in tongues of madmen, and presently he cannot "know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2: 14;), and not open to interpretation by "sense" or reason.¹⁸⁰ Thus, Simonds thinks that the tablet "very likely symbolizes the New Testament," and argues that it "can only be understood by an inspired reader, which is to say, a reader who has been transformed spiritually by conversion to the Protestant faith."¹⁸¹ Yet Posthumus' deference here to the Soothsayer seems at odds with Protestant faith in the ability of all believers to interpret scripture, and thus a Catholic interpretation might also be offered. More likely, Shakespeare is not being so denominationally precise and

rather intends us to see Posthumus as one who by the revelation of God has been stunned into knowledge. To return to the passage frequently alluded to throughout Cymbeline and also vaguely suggested in his response to the dream, Posthumus here is "sorrowing, & yet always rejoicing... having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6: 10). While he cannot precisely interpret the dream, something about it also grants Posthumus deep peace, and (most unlike all those Cymbeline critics who dismiss the theophany as irrelevant to the play) he concludes by saying of the tablet, "Be what it is, / The action of my life is like it, which / I'll keep, if but for sympathy" (5.4.148-50).

Posthumus' new-found peace is evident in the dialogue with the Jailor who comes to bring him to execution, and asks that terrifying question: "Come, sir, are you ready for death?" (5.4. 151). Quickly and lightheartedly Posthumus replies, "Overroasted rather; ready long ago," and later confirms this tone by telling the Jailor, "I am merrier to die than thou art to live" (5.4.171). This acceptance of death might again signify the stoicism Posthumus had shown in battle, but Roy Battenhouse argues that this scene shows a Christian's attitude to death with "overtones reminiscent of Thomas More's well-known jesting before his beheading."¹⁰² Certainly the whole scene is consistent with the Christian emphasis on liberation from bondage that runs throughout Cymbeline, and there is something fundamentally different about the way the Roman Jailor and Posthumus view death. To Posthumus' insistence that he does "indeed" know "which way" he shall go after death, the Jailor says, "Your death has eyes in's head then; I have not seen him so pictur'd" (5.4.176-79). In other words, the classical or perhaps even the medieval *memento mori* tradition of the "death's head" (frequently seen or referred to in Shakespeare's earlier plays; cf. Ham. 5.1.182; 2H4 2.4.234) fails to present any clear vision of what comes after death. Thus even believers in the pagan afterworld must await the guidance of others whom they as yet do not know; they must face the uncertainty of "the after-inquiry" to come at one's "own peril" (5.4.179-82). Posthumus, however, knows the truth of Who will judge him, and he no longer has any fear. As in Christianity, so in Cymbeline Posthumus' after-life will mean resurrection of his whole body, and so he tells the Jailor, "I tell thee, fellow, there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink and will not use them" (5.4.185-87). "He that hath [eyes] to [see], let him [see]" (Matt. 11: 15), Posthumus also seems to be saying here, though the Jailor sees only an "infinite mock ... that a man should have the best use of eyes to see the way of blindness!"

(5.4.188-90); again, perhaps we are being reminded that the "foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor. 1: 25). Perhaps the strongest Christian allusion occurs when a Messenger arrives and says, "bring your prisoner / to the King" (5.4.191-92). Even without the Renaissance faith in earthly kings as representative of the "King of Kings" (Rev. 19:16), no Christian would fail to hear an allusion to the gospel when Posthumus then replies, "Thou bring'st good news, I am called to be made free" (5.4.192-94). As Simonds argues, this is "an allusion to the central message of the Gospels," expressed when St. Paul says, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty where with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).¹⁸³ Posthumus' proclamation of this gospel is thus an appropriate acceptance of the Truth of the vision brought by an eagle, for that is the emblem of St. John, in whose gospel we are also promised, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8: 32). Not knowing this Truth, however, the Jailer can only conclude by wishing that there "were desolation of jailers and gallowses!" and that "we were all of one mind, and one mind good" (5.4. 203-05). Again, this pagan hope gives Christian promise, for how can earthly prisons be unlocked except by Him who has "the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1: 18), and what single mind could be good for all except He of whom St. Paul often counsels, "Let the same mind be in you that was even in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5; Rom. 12:16)? The consistency of these Christian allusions causes even Frye to argue that this "curiously oracular gaoler" looks forward to the "momentous change for the better in the fortunes of the entire human community."¹⁸⁴ 5.4 thus becomes the final prelude to a dramatic recognition scene in which revelation of truth symbolically parallels the recognition by humanity of the Incarnation, and the revelation of how all may "with one mind, and with one mouth may praise God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15: 6).

5.5 closes Cymbeline with "a veritable mottet of good news, as one voice after another reports the truth at last."¹⁸⁵ If one realizes this scene's spiritual significance, then its remarkable twists and turns do not need Shavian rewriting, and should rather be seen as a series of "recurring miracle[s]".¹⁸⁶ The scene begins on a sombre tone, as we wonder whether Posthumus is actually dead, for the "poor soldier" who fought alongside the lost princes cannot be found (5.5.2, 10-13). Belarius, as well, delays recognition by refusing to tell Cymbeline of the boys' true history, even as they are being honoured (5.5.17-19). More positively, the Queen is reported dead, though the harshness of the court is emphasized when Cornelius tells Cymbeline, "she confess'd she never

lov'd you; only / Affected greatness got by you" (5.5.37-38), and had plotted to kill Imogen and put Cloten on the throne. After this sad beginning, many of the play's major conflicts are reenacted, with characters often expressing the same confused understanding and subjective impression that they had in earlier scenes. What is consistently different throughout the scene, however, is the repetition of the resurrection motif common throughout Shakespeare's romances, so that what seems to be dead gradually comes to be known by all to be alive. Also, many of the characters must step forward and, risking their own lives, speak the truth; in turn, and after a time of initial fear and anguish, both they and those they have hurt are set free by the act of forgiveness.

This process begins when Imogen, still disguised as Lucius' page, sees "a thing / Bitter to me as death" (5.5.103-04)--Jachimo. She then demands to "render / Of whom he had this ring" (5.5.135). In the meantime "Fidele" has been identified by the two princes as the "same dead thing alive" (5.5.123) whom they had buried with Cloten, but they stay silent as Jachimo recounts the story of his wager with Posthumus. Although longwinded, this speech reestablishes the tensions of the wager plot and unifies the play. Perhaps more importantly, when Jachimo is asked to tell his tale, he says, "I am glad to be constrain'd to utter that / Which torments me to conceal" (5.5.141-42). Not empty eloquence, but rather a sign of a conscience and a recognition that only by speaking the truth can one be freed from inner torment, Jachimo's words initially serve only to torment Posthumus, who comes forward screaming "Italian fiend," before confessing that he ~~has~~ killed Imogen (5.5.210-227). Posthumus' own torment, in turn, causes Imogen to come seeking to give him "Peace" (5.5.228); but, since she is disguised, her husband tragically mistakes her as a "scornful page" and strikes her (5.5.229). This sad moment again reminds us "that violence is and always will be an integral part of fallen human nature";¹⁸⁷ not even Imogen herself is immune to this fall, for when Pisanio comes to try and comfort her she slanders him as one who tried to poison her (5.5.236-37). These moments make *Cymbeline*'s recognition scene, like its earlier action, much more violent and confusing than in most comedies, but these events may illustrate precisely "why the Redeemer must soon be born."¹⁸⁸

Within the play, a momentary peace arrives when Cornelius proves Pisanio's innocence (5.5.249-58), finally allowing Imogen and Posthumus to recognize each other and embrace. She asks, "Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?" before embracing him and saying, "Think that you are upon a rock, and now / Throw me again" (5.5.261-62). This "much disputed

passage," Nosworthy notes, is usually interpreted in two ways: "Imogen playfully instructs Posthumus to throw her to destruction, as from a rock; ii) she bids him think of himself as a shipwrecked sailor who has at last run upon the rock of security."¹⁸⁹ Wonderfully, Imogen seems to be her old, passionate, playful self, and since she here likely wraps her arms around him, "throw" probably has at least its usual sense and she is mockingly advising, so to speak, that he just try to get rid of her again. Posthumus then picks up a pun on "throw" (which Imogen probably intends since she needlessly repeats this word twice), a word that can also mean "to fell" a tree,¹⁹⁰ when he rejects this second meaning to exult, "Hang there like fruit, my soul, / Till the tree die!" (5.5.261-64). Beyond the play on words, Posthumus' words almost certainly (as is of course appropriate for this moment of reunion) reaffirm that their marriage is, at least, "till death do us part." Simonds shows that Posthumus here uses a very traditional icon for marriage, the image of the elm and the vine, which is based on Psalm 128: 39, "Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine on the sides of thine house," and also found in a more erotic form in the Song of Songs (2: 13, 7:8). Unsurprisingly, given that this is a moment of resurrection as well as reunion, Posthumus also suggests the eternal union of their marriage by signifying, unconsciously, that it is founded on Christ. Simonds explains this complex imagery by noting that the elm and the vine "were wedded in antiquity by farmers for the survival and fecundity of the vine," while the New Testament images the marriage of Christ and his Church by His saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). Christ was often pictured as a fruitful vine hanging from the cross, a recurring image of the vine "wedded" to a tree which again referred to "the mystical marriage of Christ and the Church."¹⁹¹ Hence, Posthumus draws on a long tradition in affirming the transcendental significance of their marriage. In this "marriage of true minds" (*Son.* 116), we should perhaps also interpret Imogen's reference to "rock" along similarly biblical lines. Perhaps she is using the widespread Old Testament metaphor of God as the "rock of [their] salvation" (Ps. 89:26), which "Rock was Christ," St. Paul explains (1 Cor. 10: 4). Or, she may remind us again of Posthumus' horrible questioning of whether their "affiance / Were deeply rooted" (1.6.163-64), and is referring, negatively, to Christ's parables that warn us to build our homes upon a rock (Matt. 7: 24-27; Luke 6: 48). Or, Imogen may refer to the joy which comes from knowing that their marriage is again "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3: 16-17) by being founded upon rock-like, sacrificial love. Such allusions may seem elaborately learned at such a romantic moment, but

it is part of the richness of Shakespeare, and characteristic of Renaissance literature generally, that so much intellectual meaning can be packed into so few lines, all without obscuring or diminishing the emotional pitch of Posthumus' and Imogen's reunited marriage.

The complexity of *Cymbeline*'s plot means that the play cannot end on this point, for the bothersome question of Cloten's whereabouts is raised. Honest but politically unaware Guiderius admits to the crime and is harshly condemned as Cymbeline tells him, "Thou'rt dead" (5.5.297). Then it is Belarius who must come forward and tell the truth, at great personal risk to himself, of how he had twenty years earlier kidnapped the princes. Thankfully, the worth of his "service" appeases Cymbeline, who is then joyfully reunited with his lost sons, and they with their lost sister. Happily, the king then cuts short "long interrogatories" (5.5.392) by again focusing our attention on the passion of Posthumus and Imogen and the common joy now being shared by all; "See," he says,

Posthumus anchors upon Imogen;
And she (like harmless lightning) throws her eye
On him, her brothers, me, her master, hitting
Each object with a joy; the counterchange
Is severally in all. Let's quit this ground,
And smoke the temple with our sacrifices. (5.5.392-98)

There also remains, however, the unresolved enmity between Posthumus and Jachimo, which, in a radical rewriting of his source, Shakespeare turns into a stirring picture of penance and forgiveness. In Boccaccio, after the villainy of Ambrogiuolo is discovered, the Sultan orders that he "be bound and impaled on a stake, having his naked body anointed all over with honey and never to be taken off until of itself it fell in pieces."¹⁹² Ambrogiuolo

not only died but likewise was devoured to the bare bones by flies, wasps, and hornets, whereof the country notoriously abounded. And his bones in full form and fashion remained strangely black for a long while, knit together by the sinews; as a witness to many thousands of people which afterward beheld the carcass, of his wickedness against so good and virtuous a woman that had not so much as a thought of any evil towards him. And thus was the proverb truly verified that shame succeeded after ugly sin and that the deceiver is trampled and trod by himself such as himself hath

deceived.¹⁹¹

Boccaccio thus emphasizes that the horror of the crime against the married lovers deserves the most horrible punishment imaginable. Shakespeare's faith in forgiveness, however, expressed throughout his work but especially in the romances, causes him rather to have Jachimo kneel and truly repent, offering his life. Then, Posthumus raises one more person out of death in this scene by telling him,

Kneel not to me.

The pow'r that I have on you is to spare you;
The malice towards you, to forgive you. Live,
And deal with others better. (5.5.417-18)

In these words, Shakespeare beautifully conflates both Christ's command in the Lord's prayer that we forgive others as we would be forgiven (for which Posthumus himself has recently known the need), and also some sense of St. Paul's teaching, so important to the entire tradition of Renaissance revenge tragedy, that we ought to leave revenge to the Lord (Rom. 12: 19). By doing good to one's enemy, St. Paul also says, "thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. 12: 20), which perhaps explains Posthumus' lingering malice. More importantly, forgiveness allows all to "Live" when, like Posthumus here, we "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with goodness" (Rom. 12: 21).

Cymbeline catches both aspects of Posthumus' Pauline practice of forgiveness, exclaiming "Nobly doom'd!" before himself letting the truth of forgiveness set everyone free by saying, "We'll learn our freeness of a son-in-law: / Pardon's the word to all" (5.5.421-22). Then the soothsayer comes forward to "show / His skill" in interpreting the "construction" of the tablet left behind by Jupiter (5.5.433). He again reads the message that had so baffled Posthumus earlier, when the fulfillment of the prophecy's metaphors of reunion, revival, and fresh new life seemed both unlikely and incomprehensible. Now, however, even a child could with ease match the characters of the play with their allegorical counterparts in Jupiter's tablet. Thus the soothsayer does nothing esoteric, but simply reminds us of the meaning of his own name--sayer of truth and comfort. Finally, for this is a play not only of allegory but also of typology and history, the last major act of reconciliation in the play is Cymbeline consenting to pay tribute to the Romans. As in Pericles, Shakespeare again draws on the Platonic doctrine of "the music of the spheres"¹⁹⁴ by

having "Philarnonus," the soothsayer's proper name, remind us that "The fingers of the pow'rs above do tune / The harmony of this peace" (5.5.466-67). This is Christian neoplatonism, and so the soothsayer continues, "The vision ... Is full accomplish'd" (467-470), a line which without the interceding phrase would have been an almost blasphemously close allusion to Christ's "*consummatum est*," (John 19: 30), but which is appropriate in a play depicting the time in which the turning point of salvation history takes place.¹⁹⁵

It is later history that might be referred to when the soothsayer goes on to write that "the Roman eagle ... Lessen'd herself, and in the beams o' th' sun / So vanish'd" until later Caesar "should again unite / His favor with the radiant Cymbeline, / Which shines here in the west" (5.5. 470-76). Given the close associations of the eagle and divinity in Cymbeline, the efforts of James I to make peace with Catholic Europe, and Shakespeare's own religious background, some critics think the soothsayer here suggests a peaceful reunion of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.¹⁹⁶ Speculative though this is, it certainly helps to explain the strange incongruity of an English history play ending its political strife with a command to "Let / A Roman and a British ensign wave / Friendly together," and then extending this political unity to the religious sphere as well by having Britain and Rome together "ratify" this peace "in the temple of great Jupiter" (5.5. 482-83). Some critics believe that this topical allusion detracts from the play's value, making it "too close to its royal audience,"¹⁹⁷ and allows for a closure whose "unity of design" becomes so comprehensive that it "effectively seals off the play from the world we know."¹⁹⁸ Cymbeline himself might seem to support this view when he closes the play by saying, "Never was a war did cease / (Ere bloody hands were wash'd) with such a peace" (5.5.484-85); but perhaps what he is actually saying is "not until now was there such a peace." Surely, the clearest topical and literary allusion at play's end, with Cymbeline praying, "Laud we the Gods" and proclaiming peace to all men (5.5. 477-80), is to Him whom the angels welcomed to the world by singing, "Glory be to God in the high heavens, and peace in earth, and towards men good will" (Luke 2: 14).

Most importantly, then, the peace at the conclusion of Cymbeline "hold[s] as 'twere the mirror up" to an age within whose "form and pressure" (Ham. 3.2.22-24) there entered the One who would bring peace to the world. Naturally, if the Incarnation is a real historical event, then it would retain topical relevance both in Shakespeare's day and in our own, but to speak today of the value of Cymbeline to historical movements such as twentieth-century ecumenism would only

scratch the surface of this play's relevance to human spiritual history. Like Shakespeare's other romances, Cymbeline recapitulates much of Shakespeare's career by showing how comedy can be brought out of tragedy, life out of death, through humans turning away from sin and acting in accord with the dictates of the Divine understanding of Love and Truth. In a sense Cymbeline "makes the same statements as the other romances," but it "makes them in its own strange, experimental, avant-garde idiom,"¹⁹⁹ and today it is only with the help of learned critics like Simonds that the artistry of this play can even be partially appreciated. It has been significant for the valuation of this play, and perhaps to its actual value, that in his final two romances Shakespeare moves toward structurally simpler forms of tragicomedy. However, an accurate comment about the achievement of Cymbeline might be found within the play itself. Like the tapestry in Imogen's bedchamber, this play is

A piece of work
 So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
 In workmanship and value, which I wonder'd
 Could be so rarely and exactly wrought,
 Since the true life on't was-- (2.4.72-76)

In other words, as it is "doubtful which of the two, workmanship or value, was greater,"²⁰⁰ and whether the internal construction or ultimate value of Cymbeline is greater, one should wonder not only at its technical precision, but also at how rarely and wonderfully it celebrates the coming of the True Life of the world.

Ch. 4 Endnotes

- ¹ Johnson 908.
- ² Felperin, Romance 178.
- ³ Smith, Cym. 1517.
- ⁴ Hazlitt 179.
- ⁵ Felperin, Romance 178. Felperin uses this line from Coleridge as the epigraph for his chapter on Cymbeline.
- ⁶ Shaw, Cymbeline Refinished.
- ⁷ Hudson 187.
- ⁸ Hazlitt 180.
- ⁹ Swinburne 227.
- ¹⁰ Granville-Barker 530.
- ¹¹ Webster 271.
- ¹² Webster 274.
- ¹³ Quiller-Couch 222.
- ¹⁴ Knight, Crown 156-57.
- ¹⁵ Leggatt 200.
- ¹⁶ Mowat 65.
- ¹⁷ Brownlow 145.
- ¹⁸ Brownlow 149. Sidney did not stop with the dictum that the poet "never affirmeth," but rather argues that the poet labors not "to tell you what is, or is not, but what should or should not be" (168).
- ¹⁹ Nosworthy, Cym. lxxix.
- ²⁰ Nosworthy, Cym. lxxix.
- ²¹ Boyce 514.
- ²² Frye, Natural 65.
- ²³ Frye, Natural 65.
- ²⁴ Traversi 43.
- ²⁵ Nosworthy, Cym. xlviii.
- ²⁶ Boyce 514.
- ²⁷ Nosworthy, Cym. xlix.
- ²⁸ Goddard 631.
- ²⁹ Felperin, Romance 177.
- ³⁰ Bate 215.
- ³¹ Nosworthy, Cym. xlix.
- ³² Nosworthy, Cym. xlix.
- ³³ Nosworthy, Cym. 189-91.
- ³⁴ Holinshed 203.
- ³⁵ Rivers 58.
- ³⁶ Holinshed 204.
- ³⁷ Holinshed 204.
- ³⁸ Rivers 58.
- ³⁹ Tillyard, History.
- ⁴⁰ Rivers 58.
- ⁴¹ Yates 17-37.
- ⁴² Ribner History Play 24; Campbell 106-116.
- ⁴³ Harris 209.
- ⁴⁴ Knight 167.
- ⁴⁵ Simonds 21.
- ⁴⁶ Jones 90.
- ⁴⁷ Brockbank 43.
- ⁴⁸ Yates 50.

- ⁴⁹ Knight 164.
- ⁵⁰ Leggatt 193-94.
- ⁵¹ Knight 162-63.
- ⁵² Brockbank 43.
- ⁵³ See Bennett.
- ⁵⁴ Ribner, History Play 24.
- ⁵⁵ Leggatt 207.
- ⁵⁶ For example, chalices, holy water, orisons, prayers for the dead, and the Catholic attitude to suicide. See Mutschmann 218-37.
- ⁵⁷ Jones 91-92.
- ⁵⁸ Milward 83-84.
- ⁵⁹ Geller 249.
- ⁶⁰ Simonds 227.
- ⁶¹ Yates 52-53.
- ⁶² Yates 91.
- ⁶³ Berry, "Shakespeare's Last" 674-77.
- ⁶⁴ Smith, "Topicality" 215.
- ⁶⁵ Ribner, "Shakespeare and Legendary".
- ⁶⁶ G.B. Harrison, qtd. Smith, "Topicality" 221.
- ⁶⁷ Felperin, Romance 195-96.
- ⁶⁸ Simonds 25.
- ⁶⁹ Simonds 25.
- ⁷⁰ Leggatt 207.
- ⁷¹ Holinshed 203.
- ⁷² Frye, "Recognition" 240.
- ⁷³ Yates 42.
- ⁷⁴ Moffet 208.
- ⁷⁵ Moffet 208.
- ⁷⁶ Felperin 181.
- ⁷⁷ Felperin 178-79.
- ⁷⁸ Seznec, qtd. Simonds 295.
- ⁷⁹ Simonds 294.
- ⁸⁰ Knight 168.
- ⁸¹ Knight 179.
- ⁸² Knight 179.
- ⁸³ Knight 183.
- ⁸⁴ Leggatt 203.
- ⁸⁵ Traversi 93.
- ⁸⁶ Simonds 50.
- ⁸⁷ Simonds 50.
- ⁸⁸ "Cross" has a similarly polysemous significance in Hamlet 1.1.127.
- ⁸⁹ Simonds 50.
- ⁹⁰ Simonds 50.
- ⁹¹ Knight 168.
- ⁹² Muir, "Theophanies" 37. Muir alters only the word order of Heb. 12:6.
- ⁹³ Knight 202.
- ⁹⁴ Frye, Natural 70.
- ⁹⁵ Nosworthy, Cym. xxxvii.
- ⁹⁶ Hartwig 61-103.
- ⁹⁷ Knight 183.
- ⁹⁸ Knight 109.
- ⁹⁹ Knight 202.

- ¹⁰⁰ Knight 202.
¹⁰¹ Knight 202.
¹⁰² Marshall 19.
¹⁰³ Hazlitt 179.
¹⁰⁴ Simonds 13.
¹⁰⁵ Simonds 16-21.
¹⁰⁶ A question also asked, but not convincingly answered, by Coleridge, Lectures 301.
¹⁰⁷ Nosworthy, Cym. 3.
¹⁰⁸ Marsh 25.
¹⁰⁹ Marsh 25.
¹¹⁰ BBC Cym.
¹¹¹ Simonds 136-37.
¹¹² Smith, Cym. 1524.
¹¹³ Nosworthy, Cym. 16.
¹¹⁴ Bradley 21.
¹¹⁵ Marsh 28.
¹¹⁶ Simonds 203.
¹¹⁷ Simonds 213.
¹¹⁸ Simonds 215.
¹¹⁹ Knight 148.
¹²⁰ Hosley, Cym. 53.
¹²¹ Lawrence 186.
¹²² Simonds 18-20.
¹²³ Coleridge, Lectures 388.
¹²⁴ Augustine, On Christian I.XXXVI.
¹²⁵ See Allen.
¹²⁶ Leggatt 193.
¹²⁷ Ann Thomson 215-16.
¹²⁸ Simonds 73.
¹²⁹ Simonds 203.
¹³⁰ Simonds 96.
¹³¹ Simonds 101.
¹³² Simonds 96.
¹³³ Simonds 95-119.
¹³⁴ Simonds 96.
¹³⁵ Simonds 96.
¹³⁶ Schmidt 215.
¹³⁷ Simonds 169.
¹³⁸ Granville-Barker xlvii.
¹³⁹ See Lenz *et al.*
¹⁴⁰ Simonds 226-27.
¹⁴¹ Kökeritz 113.
¹⁴² Lawry 183-84.
¹⁴³ Battenhouse 216.
¹⁴⁴ Simonds 139.
¹⁴⁵ Simonds 164.
¹⁴⁶ Simonds 174.
¹⁴⁷ Cf. Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," which also influenced The Tempest (Kermode, Tmp. xxxiv).
¹⁴⁸ Simonds 31; Cf. Guarini and Pico della Mirandola.
¹⁴⁹ Simonds 167.
¹⁵⁰ Simonds 161.
¹⁵¹ Cf. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine Bk. 4; Erasmus, Copia.

- ¹⁵² Simonds 149.
- ¹⁵³ Simonds 149.
- ¹⁵⁴ Simonds 151.
- ¹⁵⁵ Simonds 186.
- ¹⁵⁶ Simon 58-59.
- ¹⁵⁷ Booth 122-23.
- ¹⁵⁸ Simonds 57.
- ¹⁵⁹ Leggatt 201.
- ¹⁶⁰ Smith, Cym. 1548.
- ¹⁶¹ Beckett 2249.
- ¹⁶² Matchett 100.
- ¹⁶³ Warren 67.
- ¹⁶⁴ Brownlew 144.
- ¹⁶⁵ Simonds 233.
- ¹⁶⁶ qtd. Simonds 233.
- ¹⁶⁷ Kirsch 226-28.
- ¹⁶⁸ Simonds 153; Simonds notes that another example of "bleeding" occurs in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," l. 112.
- ¹⁶⁹ Simonds 154.
- ¹⁷⁰ Hartwig 62.
- ¹⁷¹ Swander 219-24.
- ¹⁷² Wright 62.
- ¹⁷³ Leggatt 202.
- ¹⁷⁴ Skura 211.
- ¹⁷⁵ Frye, Natural 69.
- ¹⁷⁶ Moffet 212.
- ¹⁷⁷ Swander 221.
- ¹⁷⁸ Simonds 295.
- ¹⁷⁹ Simonds 327.
- ¹⁸⁰ Schmidt 1026.
- ¹⁸¹ Simonds 224.
- ¹⁸² Battenhouse 217.
- ¹⁸³ Simonds 329.
- ¹⁸⁴ Frye, Natural 66.
- ¹⁸⁵ Simonds 329.
- ¹⁸⁶ As D.R.C. Marsh entitles his book on Cymbeline.
- ¹⁸⁷ Simonds 78.
- ¹⁸⁸ Simonds 78.
- ¹⁸⁹ Nosworthy, Cym. 176-77.
- ¹⁹⁰ Nosworthy, Cym. 177.
- ¹⁹¹ Simonds 250-51.
- ¹⁹² Boccaccio 200.
- ¹⁹³ Boccaccio 200-01.
- ¹⁹⁴ Nosworthy, "Music".
- ¹⁹⁵ Kastan 224-25.
- ¹⁹⁶ Jones 91-92; Milward 83-84; Battenhouse 216.
- ¹⁹⁷ Jones 97.
- ¹⁹⁸ Felperin 196.
- ¹⁹⁹ Wain 216.
- ²⁰⁰ Schmidt's translation of this difficult passage, qtd. Nosworthy, Cym. 66.

"To see the life as lively mock'd as ever still sleep mock'd death":

The "Good Truth" of The Winter's Tale

Of the four romances, none has had its estimate of value raised more in recent years than The Winter's Tale. Despite a respectably popular reception on the Jacobean stage, neoclassicals, beginning with Ben Jonson, declared themselves "loth to make Nature afraid," as Shakespeare had in his '*Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries*," which "mixe head with other mens heeles" (Fair, Induction 138-40). Dryden included The Winter's Tale among plays which "were made up of some ridiculous, incoherent story,"¹ while Pope, diplomatically, avoided a similar devaluation of Shakespeare by claiming that only "a few particular passages were of his hand."² Such comments were unsurprising given The Winter's Tale's brash violation of the unities of time and place. Perhaps what offended most of all, however, was the restoration of Hermione. Even the usually imaginative Coleridge thought it "mere indolence" not to provide "some ground" for her sixteen year absence,³ while Charlotte Lennox called the statue scene "a mean and absurd contrivance," and indignantly demanded:

how can it be imagined that Hermione, a virtuous and affectionate wife, would conceal herself during sixteen years in a solitary house, though she was sensible that her repentant husband was all that time consuming away with grief and remorse for her death.⁴

For eighteenth-century and even many Romantic and Victorian critics, then, the improbability of The Winter's Tale's plot made it impossible to find in it the "just representations of general nature" that make art both pleasing and instructive.⁵ Early twentieth-century critics such as Quiller-Couch continued the prosecution by following Strachey and arguing not only that the play lacks verisimilitude, but also that it employs "careless workmanship" such as the awkward transition between the play's two halves and the clumsy portrayal of the death of Antigonus, whom we last see exiting "pursued by a bear" (3.2.58).⁶ The case against The Winter's Tale seemed complete.

Art itself allows us to begin to see how this case was not only refuted but reversed, for it is in the theatre where The Winter's Tale began to be revalued. The eighteenth-century theatre often performed only the second, comic half of the play,⁷ but in spite of heavily edited productions

Hazlitt yet calls it "one of the best-acting of our author's plays,"⁸ and productions such as Macready's in the early nineteenth century were emotionally moving.⁹ According to Dennis Bartholomeusz, the play's leading performance historian, the turning point was Granville-Barker's 1912 production. It cast aside the historicism of productions such as Kean's in the 1850s, which had tried to make the play's setting entirely Greek,¹⁰ and instead presented the play so that "art and nature, the symbolic and the realistic, convention and spontaneity, tradition and innovation were counterpointed in a natural tension and final harmony."¹¹ Bartholomeusz believes that productions such as Granville-Barker's are required by the astonishing diversity of the play:

In The Winter's Tale Time future and Time past coexist with Time present--Giulio Romano, a Renaissance artist from Mantua, the pre-Christian Delphic oracle, an Emperor of Russia, kings of Sicily and Bohemia, and the Warwickshire folk of Elizabethan England inhabit the same imaginative world.¹²

Rather than using "the principle of scenic literalism and the unities of time and place," Bartholomeusz argues, Shakespeare constructs The Winter's Tale using "an older convention of successive staging, where on the open stage movable properties serving as symbols defined time and place."¹³ To present this world fully, "the task of the director in the theatre is to preserve the play's disparate life while at the same time reaching for the organic unity which welds that life into a harmony of design."¹⁴

This is no small task, and although one critic called Granville-Barker's production, "a riper and juster piece of Shakespearean criticism" than any he had seen,¹⁵ it is sometimes impossible to include both "the symbolic and the realistic" in performance. Directors seem compelled, for example, to present either a naturalistic or an emblematic bear in 3.3. While performance criticism is vital to an understanding of The Winter's Tale, G. Wilson Knight's own criticism is perhaps even more influential upon the twentieth century's reinterpretation and revaluation of this play. Against the neoclassical trivialization of the play, Knight argues that The Winter's Tale not only includes as a central theme but is itself a supreme example of, in Perdita's phrase, "an art which in their piedness shares / With great creating Nature" (4.4.87). Using this phrase to entitle his seminal essay, Knight suggests that the The Winter's Tale understands the concept of nature as broadly as does neoclassical thought, concluding that Shakespeare's play conveys

a vague, numinous sense of mighty powers, working through both the natural order and man's religious consciousness, that preserve, in spite of all appearance, the good. Orthodox tradition is used, but it does not direct; a pagan naturalism is used too. The Bible has been an influence; so have classical myth and Renaissance pastoral; but the greatest influence was Life itself, that creating and protecting deity whose superhuman presence and powers the drama labours to define.¹⁶

Since Knight, Caroline Spurgeon supported his emphasis on "nature" by finding in the The Winter's Tale's imagery a repeated idea of "the common flow of life through all things,"¹⁷ while Frye discovered "at the centre of the play's imagery" the "cycle of nature, turning through the winter and summer of the year and through the age and youth of human generations."¹⁸ For Frye, The Winter's Tale is thus an example of elemental anthropological myth. Arden editor J.H.P. Pafford, however, argues vigorously that much more than mythical critics have noticed, "the elements of realism in the play are strong."¹⁹ More concretely, Bartholomeusz values the play for its "sense of life inexhaustible at the roots of the earth."²⁰ Howard Felperin, as well, argues that "this play is populated with characters ... who bear an extraordinary resemblance" to "the men and women we know in the real world."²¹ Entitling his essay "Our Carver's Excellence," Felperin most values The Winter's Tale for "its combination of romantic design with mimetic fidelity to life,"²² such as the touch "Julio Romano" (5.2.97) has added by carving the wrinkles of age into the statue of Hermione. Felperin admiringly writes:

The peculiarly Shakespearean ability to create in a mere three thousand lines an imaginative environment so fully realized that we take it, like Hermione's "statue," for life itself and its creatures for fellow human beings is nowhere more in evidence than in The Winter's Tale.²³

In sharp opposition to such critics, though, other twentieth-century interpreters respond to the case against The Winter's Tale by following Quiller-Couch in seeing the play's artistic techniques as crude and archaic.²⁴ As with Pericles, many regard Shakespeare's dramaturgy in The Winter's Tale as deliberately and self-consciously artificial, as is stressed when Shakespeare thrice suggests near the play's end that we are watching an "old tale" (5.2.28, 61; 5.3.117). Some interpret this method as Shakespeare intentionally using "antiquated technique"²⁵ to alert his

audience to symbolic meaning, meaning often related to medieval religious drama;²⁶ but, others follow E.C. Pettet's view that in watching the romances one feels "remoteness" and a constant sense that "what we are listening to is, after all, only a play."²⁷ Perhaps the most influential of such critics has been Frye, who emphasizes that "Shakespeare deliberately chose incredible comic plots,"²⁸ and stresses that "such things happen in stories, not in life."²⁹ A.P. Riemer, who gratefully acknowledges the debt of his Antic Fables to Frye,³⁰ similarly argues that Shakespearean comedy in general--of which The Winter's Tale gives an exemplary "distillation of qualities"³¹ -- does not "entertain seriously those moral, intellectual and, at times, even overtly philosophical notions that criticism attempts to expose."³² Rather, Riemer values the "jesting seriousness and solemn levity" of these plays,³³ hence repeating the interpretation but reversing the evaluation of Dryden, who devalued The Winter's Tale because "the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment."³⁴ Not just beauty, but also humour and truth seem to be in the eye of this play's beholder.

How might a Lonerganian navigate this critical impasse in the hopes of achieving an authentic knowledge of The Winter's Tale's meaning and value? Is there any way for "the good truth [to be] known" (2.1.200) about this play? If its religious meaning is as profound as many claim, why are we so often reminded that we "are watching a staged performance,"³⁵ one so improbable that it "should be hooted at" (5.3.116)? Since the extreme form of either side of the critical argument--that the play is just like life or that it is comical fantasy irrelevant to any aspect of reality--is made untenable by clear, opposing meanings also in the text, an obvious hermeneutic strategy is to class The Winter's Tale as yet another Shakespearean example in which criticism must find "both / and" rather than "either / or" propositions in the play. As Pafford argues, it is "dangerous to have any single line of approach to a play which may well be,"³⁶ in F.R. Leavis' words, "a supreme instance of Shakespeare's poetic complexity."³⁷ Since Knight's time, other critics have found in it many aspects of meaning beyond pagan naturalism, classical myth, and Christian faith. Pastoral has remained important in studies of the play's genre, but the structure of the play has also been described as a "diptych" since, uniquely among Shakespeare's works, first tragedy and then comedy is equally portrayed.³⁸ This construction has rarely been tried before or after Shakespeare, perhaps because of the difficulties inherent in its "rapidity of movement" and

“loss in consecutive harmony of impression.”³⁹ Yet as a successful, sophisticated version of the popular Jacobean genre of tragicomedy, The Winter’s Tale ought to have been valued by Dryden for the comprehensiveness which he valued in all tragicomedy.⁴⁰ Superbly illustrating the Frygean notion that the last plays show “the end of the steady growth of Shakespeare’s technical interest in the structure of drama,”⁴¹ this play has the romantic motifs and theological concern with providence and resurrection found in Pericles, the controlling classical deity and experimental mingling of genre of Cymbeline, and many other aspects of comedy and tragedy from Shakespeare’s earlier plays. Yet, except for the brief speech of Time, this play lacks the moral interpreter figured by Pericles’ Gower, and at least seems to lack the explicit Christian theology of Cymbeline. Since this play includes so much of all that Shakespeare understands by both nature and art, perhaps the best way to interpret The Winter’s Tale is to see it as a “successful Metaphysical conceit” in which “opposite or conflicting experiences are brought together” in “unity.”⁴²

The inadequacy of such an approach is suggested, however, by Rosalie Colie’s reminder that genre is not divorced from life, and that the moral questions inherent in The Winter’s Tale “simply [force] us to face what is ‘tragic’ and what is ‘comic’ in life and in plays.”⁴³ To put it more gently, David Young eloquently argues that the pastoral element of The Winter’s Tale does not propose a paradoxical balancing of art and nature, but rather asks us to face the question of what is “the real and the unreal, the substantial and the insubstantial”;⁴⁴ to Young, the “old tale” aspect of the play is an invitation, “as if the dramatist were saying: ‘You think this is merely artifice and convention. Just see what potential it contains.’”⁴⁵ An even more salutary warning against seeing this play as a metaphysical paradox is found in Charles Frey’s Shakespeare’s Vast Romance. As his title suggests, Frey is well aware of The Winter’s Tale’s comprehensiveness, but concludes that

It has been fashionable for some years to see Shakespeare as the poet of paradox, of multivalence, complementarity, and plurisignation, as if he were a relativist par excellence. But the truth is more nearly that Shakespeare works steadily in his plays toward justifications of service, forgiveness, and familial love.⁴⁶

One might wish to expand Frey’s list of the values mediated by The Winter’s Tale, but both the play itself and numerous other critics can be cited to show that surely the most profoundly untrue

thing ever written about Shakespearean romance is Frye's comment that "Shakespeare had no opinions, no values, no philosophy, no principles of anything except dramatic structure."⁴⁷ In response to the paradox of nature against art in the play, many critics naturally cite the argument between Perdita and Polixenes in 4.4, which concludes with them agreeing that there "is an art / Which does mend Nature--change it rather; but / The art itself is Nature" (4.4.95-97). This conclusion may sound paradoxical, but it is a coherent philosophy reasonably close to Pope's neoclassical dictum that nature is "at once the source, and end, and test, of art,"⁴⁸ and of course many critics have further noticed that this abstract conclusion becomes concrete in the statue scene at play's end. As Knight observed, critics "have avoided" this scene, yet even more than most endings, "the crucial and revealing event to which the whole action moves" is "the resurrection of Hermione."⁴⁹ An obvious extratextual indication of Shakespeare's intention here is provided by comparison with the play's main source, Greene's Pandosto, which The Winter's Tale follows closely except for the rather crucial difference that Pandosto's queen remains dead and Pandosto's final act is suicide. To understand the meaning created by the movement of Shakespeare's play, then, we too must follow its voice of conscience, Paulina, and both be able first to "look down and see what death is doing" at the end of the play's tragic close (3.2.148-49), and also try to understand how and why "dear Life redeems" the dead at the play's true end (5.3.103). Neither abstract symbolism nor concrete, human meaning mediated throughout the play should be suppressed, but understanding why one half of the play triumphs over the other--in ways not anticipated by Greene's work, though it is subtitled "The Triumph of Time"--is crucial to evaluating the play. An epigraph for the doctrine taught by the movement of The Winter's Tale might be found in Sonnet 119, in which Shakespeare proclaims:

O benefit of ill, now I find true
 That better is by evil still made better,
 And ruin'd love when it is built anew
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater. (9-12)

The truth here expressed is profoundly relevant to The Winter's Tale's structure, meaning, and value, but its tone is again more serious than the play's proclivity for comic ambiguity. More apt yet is a classic tragicomic moment earlier in the play. Leontes says that he will publicly condemn Hermione because "this business / Will raise us all" (a line in which "raise" literally means

"rouse"⁵⁰), since he fears the people may be awakened by the imprisonment of the queen.

Antigonus, who has agreed to take the babe to the wilderness, puns on "raise" as meaning "raze," and completes the sentence with an aside--"To laughter, as I take it / If the good truth were known" (2.1.196-99)--meaning that he expects them all to be ridiculed once the truth of Hermione's innocence is known. After Hermione is raised from the dead at play's end, however, Antigonus' aside can be remembered by Shakespeare's audience as a subtly ambiguous, comic foreshadowing of the "good truth" by which most if not all of the play's characters will be raised to understanding the foolish reality of Hermione's resurrected life (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 23-27). Appreciating the good truth of this play, then, requires serious attention both to the complex, abstract ideas by which Shakespeare conveys profound meanings and values, and to the tragicomic, concrete movement by which the play's vivid characters lead us toward redeemed life at play's end.

To take but one example of this play's polysemous meanings, one need look no further than this play's title. Initially, the title might be taken as a simple balancing of nature and art, with "winter" representing nature and "tale" the romantic, mythical "old tale."⁵¹ On the latter aspect of the title, one might think, because of the play's numerous anachronisms, that the sense of time in The Winter's Tale is static, a "timeless world."⁵² Yet Bartholomeusz interprets "Tale" as placing the play "within the culture of the folk- and fairy-tale, the sort of tale which through its improbabilities explores very real issues, issues profoundly relevant to our inner life."⁵³ Frey, too, finds complexity by noting that "the 'Winter' is also the grave of Fall: dead, timeless, abstract, artlike," while "the 'Tale' is Time's own narrative: moving and regenerative."⁵⁴ Seen as the twin movements of season and story, fuelled in both cases by time, the "sad tale" which Mamillius tells us is "best for winter" can be understood as a "tale of gossip" in which Time acts, in one of its characteristic iconographic roles, as destroyer.⁵⁵ This is the characteristic role of time in Shakespeare's sonnets, and in Greene's Pandosto. As many critics note, readers of Greene could watch most of The Winter's Tale and expect a conclusion like the sad tale of Pandosto, so for them Shakespeare's title is one more ruse--along with Paulina's convincing announcement of her death and Hermione's appearance as a ghost to Antigonus (cf. 3.3.17)--to convince the audience that Hermione is indeed dead. Since the title proves false, though, and the play ends in spring with a seemingly "hootable" tale proving true, a whole new range of ironic meanings become suggested by the title, such as the truth that there will inevitably be an end to cold and a return of spring,

regeneration and life. Thus Time takes on its second iconographic role, revealer of truth⁵⁶ (as in Pericles the daughter of time, here embodied in Perdita) and “*the winter’s tale*” becomes the universal story which shows finally how suffering borne patiently eventually reveals the truth of spring. One could explicate the title further, but already it should be clear that in a play so fertile with meaning, in which “nearly every line is a comment on every other line,”⁵⁷ the potential meanings of the play are far beyond any critic’s initial aesthetic, moral, intellectual, and religious horizons.

Some critics, however, substitute their own interpretative horizons for the meanings offered by The Winter’s Tale. Charles Barber’s Marxist reading, though it interestingly uses the play’s pastoral themes to view the play as being “about the process of social change in seventeenth-century England,” and about “the acceptance of the processes of history,” devalues Shakespeare for using the supernatural “as a substitute for plausible natural causes” of this change.⁵⁸ Even fellow socialist critic Bill Overton, who also suggests the play “fails as social analysis,” cautions that “perhaps that is not what it is.”⁵⁹ Like Barber, though, Overton objects to critics who present the play as “a religious experience telling several essential truths about life.”⁶⁰ Perhaps, however, both critics are so resistant to the notion that God authors history that they cannot analyze with any rigour the meaning of providence within The Winter’s Tale. A more sophisticated avoidance of the meaning of providence in the play is the reading Felperin gave after embracing deconstruction. Felperin inquires, “on what authority do we assume ... that Hermione is in fact innocent of Leontes’ suspicions in the opening act?”⁶¹ To deconstruct the assurance with which we can accept as true the proclamation of the oracle, however, Felperin must transfer Leontes’ hermeneutic of jealousy to the audience, and claim that “the more closely we attend to the language of Polixenes and Hermione, the more we may detect in it (like Leontes again) a whisper of sexual innuendo.”⁶² Extratextual historical evidence suggests that even Felperin’s strongest point--the possibility of a kiss between Hermione and Polixenes at 1.2.108--“could have been in harmony with Elizabethan manners and customs.”⁶³ More importantly, all of Hermione’s words and actions can be read as chaste, and all of the other evidence in the play proclaims her innocence. When Leontes (like Felperin) exclaims, “There is no truth at all i’ th’ oracle” (3.2.140), and is immediately told that his son and heir Mamillius has died from grief, perhaps Shakespeare is teaching the explanation

Leontes himself gives, that "Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice" (3.2.144-45). In addition to providence, the numerous negative and positive values related to Hermione's and Leontes' marriage, such as the error of his jealousy and the beauty of her fidelity, are all made meaningless if we are unable to trust that Hermione is innocent.

Less blatant though still destructive avoidance of the potential polysemous meanings of The Winter's Tale has also been practiced, surprisingly, by some critics who read the play with a literalism attributable only to naive realism. This approach is suggested by Frye, despite his own elaborate heuristic, when he rejects the notion that this play is an allegory, and argues that "in Shakespeare the meaning of the play is the play, there being nothing to be abstracted from the total experience of the play."⁶⁴ It is unclear whether Frye intends "total experience" to include abstract ideas, but of course much of Frye's own criticism of the play shows that he has learned some abstract ideas from it. The vague critique of Frye is given dogmatic clarity by Richard Levin, who attacks allegorical criticism for the same reasons he attacks thematic criticism (cf. Ch. 2 above); both, he argues, fail to be emotionally moving, both produce incommensurably polysemous meanings, and both modes of reading are unfamiliar to Shakespeare's audience.⁶⁵ Late in his article on The Winter's Tale, Levin admits that "allegorical critics do not deny that Shakespeare's plays contain a literal meaning,"⁶⁶ yet he still insists that all allegorists find "another level or dimension of meaning which the literal one subserves."⁶⁷ This argument, however, ignores both the tradition of allegory founded on the literal sense, and ignores typology, in which all of the multiple meanings are considered historical (cf. Ch. 2 above). In this tradition, multiplicity of meaning is exactly what typological poets such as Dante or Herbert do intend, meaning which often intends emotional effects; there is no *a priori* reason to exclude Shakespeare from similar methods of signification. Levin's omission is particularly problematic given that one of the critics whom he attacks for reading the play as a Christian allegory, J.A. Bryant, explicitly states that he views Shakespeare as "a genuine typologist" who presents characters "as incorporating meaning rather than pointing to it."⁶⁸ Arden editor J.A. Pafford also misrepresents the Christian typologist by writing that, for Bryant, "Hermione the redeemer is St. Paul's Christ,"⁶⁹ a claim that for an orthodox Christian is laughably heretical. In fact, Bryant explicitly states that he "does not mean that Hermione stands for Christ or serves as an allegory for Christ,"⁷⁰ and rather emphasizes that their likeness is typological and analogous: Hermione "the redeemer is like St. Paul's Christ who

saves by grace."⁷¹ Further, for Bryant these analogies are largely dependent on Shakespeare's biblical allusions which, as with most good poets, "earn their way in the context in which they appear."⁷²

Bryant's interpretation can be assessed only within the context of The Winter's Tale, but before going to it one must also consider Levin's chief exhibit in his case against allegorical criticism, which is the Shakespeare Allusion-Book. This compendium consists largely of brief plot summaries by seventeenth-century playgoers, and Levin stresses that it gives no evidence that "any play" of Shakespeare's "was ever viewed as an allegory by anyone at that time."⁷³ This is seemingly compelling evidence, but only two references to The Winter's Tale are recorded, and one of them, by Simon Forman, even fails to mention the play's statue scene. Levin's other "expert witness," Ben Jonson, actually critiques Shakespeare's lack of realism, lambasting his willingness "to make nature afraid" in The Winter's Tale (Fair, Induction 138).⁷⁴ Yet Levin deduces that, since Jonson would know that criteria such as "nature" are "irrelevant in an allegorical work," he concludes that "Jonson did not perceive any allegory in The Winter's Tale."⁷⁵ Yet perhaps Jonson did see these plays' lack of realism as allegorical, and simply disapproves of that artistic technique, as might be suggested by the concreteness of a work in which his remark is made, Bartholomew Fair. At the very least, Jonson's recognition of the lack of realism in the plays, affirmed by most subsequent critics, might cause Levin to question his own literal reading. Although F. David Hoeniger perhaps exaggerates when he argues that "only if we approach The Winter's Tale as an allegory can we do justice to its greatness," and though his use of dead geological metaphors in the following passage obscures the vital point that meaning is not mediated by concrete representation alone, he is surely right to argue that in The Winter's Tale,

however satisfying a great part of the surface meaning, there nevertheless remain many passages and scenes which do not make much sense unless viewed as part of a deeper imaginative world hidden behind the surface ... at the end, a statue suddenly turns into a human person, presumably dead for sixteen years. Such blatant improbabilities may well be a hint that the meaning of the play is symbolic rather than literal.⁷⁶

Certainly some objective internal features in The Winter's Tale, such as the names of some of the characters,⁷⁷ or the "religious language surrounding Hermione's restoration,"⁷⁸ do "seem to

encourage allegorical interpretation.”⁷⁹ However, the possibility of finding symbolic meaning may not be as important as simply recognizing this play’s numerous spiritual values. Many of these values could be described humanistically and, as already noted, it is part of the effect of the anachronisms in the play to extend its meaning beyond any single culture; further, it is clearly part of Shakespeare’s value that his work can be significant within such a wide variety of human cultures. Yet, as in Pericles and Cymbeline, so in The Winter’s Tale the gods often seem to be the baptized classical deities so common in Renaissance literature. This play often employs a “Christianized phraseology”⁸⁰ based largely upon biblical allusion; in fact, the most explicit biblical reference in all the romances occurs when Polixenes denies the charge against him, saying that if he had committed adultery, then would “my name / Be yok’d with his that did betray the Best!” (1.2.418-19). In Bryant’s defence, this allusion does clearly parallel Hermione with Christ, while of course not claiming that the two are identical. As a result of such allusions, much of the spiritual meaning of The Winter’s Tale--such as the now (or perhaps once?) commonplace notion of monogamous marriage or more specifically theological notions such as the three stages of “sin,” “repentance,” and “restoration”⁸¹ into which some critics divide the play --takes on connotations especially resonant to the Christian faith; unsurprisingly, many of the critics who have most highly valued the play have stressed its Christian meaning. However, deciding to what extent the broader structure and meaning of the play should be understood in Christian terms has also been perhaps the single most controversial issue in twentieth-century criticism of the play.

Tillyard made perhaps the broadest of all claims for The Winter’s Tale’s Christian significance by seeing it as a compression of all of Dante’s Divine Comedy into a single play; acts one to three are Leontes’ *inferno*, while at the end of Act Three and beginning of Act Five we glimpse his sixteen year *purgatorio*; then in Act Five we have the *paradiso* as Leontes is reunited with his daughter, wife, and friend.⁸² D.G. James, though, claims that Shakespeare’s “mythology was not Christian; as long as he wrote poetry he tried to maintain its independence of traditional forms.”⁸³ S.L. Bethell responds to James by agreeing that Shakespeare avoided a “too deliberate use of Christian symbolism” but denies that The Winter’s Tale aims at providing an alternative mythology to the Christian scheme; rather, it “does in fact follow the Christian scheme of redemption. It is ... not a new interpretation of human experience but the old interpretation newly translated into terms of the romance and all the more faithfully for its synthesis of pagan beauty and

Christian truth."⁸⁴ Bethell's study is often attacked. Arden editor Pafford argues that he "takes any opportunity, however fanciful, to refer incidents or words in The Winter's Tale to Christian scriptures or doctrines."⁸⁵ Frye claims that there are "no explicit links" to Christianity in the play,⁸⁶ and more recently Overton writes that "despite much careful argument" from Bethell, "a Christian perspective seems imposed on the play rather than inherent in it."⁸⁷ Brian Cosgrove, on the other hand, argues that The Winter's Tale presents, "within the secular limits of drama, certain truths which we should usually think of as Christian."⁸⁸ Are these critics reading the same play? Is one side of this debate more convincing than the other?

It should be noted that Pafford, Overton, and Frye directly consider very few of the biblical or theological allusions cited by critics who find Christian meaning in the play. It is true that this play's figurative language is never so explicit as to make meaning singular rather than polysemous; yet, Christian allusions are part of the objective meaning that is present in the text. Along with these meanings, one can also expect combinations of meaning, as Francois Laroque suggests when he cites the following gloss for Easter Sunday from Robert Nelson's widely used Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England:

the consideration of things without us, the natural courses of variations in the creatures, raise the possibility of our resurrection. The day dies into night and rises with the next morning; the summer dies into winter, when the earth becomes a general sepulchre; but when the spring appears, nature revives and flourishes; the corn lies buried in the ground, and being corrupted revives and multiplies.⁸⁹

This "conjunction of pagan and Christian symbolism at the time of the Easter liturgy," Laroque argues, "might well be considered a general description of the essential symbolic motifs developed in The Winter's Tale."⁹⁰ This conjunction is also suggested by the biblical chapter most often alluded to in this play, 1 Corinthians 15, which like "Shakespeare's dramatization" similarly links "the return of spring to the earth" with resurrection;⁹¹ in answer to the question, "How are the dead raised up?", St. Paul answers:

O fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare corne, as it falleth, of wheat, or of some other. But God giveth it a body at his own pleasure, even to every seede his own body" (1 Cor 15: 36-38).

The aptness of the allusion here is given further historical credence by Chris Hassel, who distinguishes “genetic” works, plays or masques “clearly named or written for festival performance,” from “affective” works which though without specific correlation to a festival day, “might occasionally have been chosen ... for their unusual fitness.”⁹² G.E. Bentley notes that The Winter’s Tale was called upon for a court performance on Easter Tuesday 1618,⁹³ causing Hassel to argue that this play would have been “so immediately and joyously relevant to the Easter context of the benefits of resurrection that few among the Easter Tuesday audience could have missed its appropriateness.”⁹⁴

Though partial, then, Christian meaning in the play must nevertheless be seen as an objectively real part of The Winter’s Tale’s meaning. However, its relation to the other aspects of this play is likely to remain controversial because of foundational differences between the theological horizons of the play’s critics. Knight argues at one point that

Though Shakespeare writes, broadly speaking, from a Christian standpoint, and though Christianized phraseology recurs, yet the poet is rather to be supposed as using Christian concepts than as dominated by them. They are implemental to his purpose; but so too are ‘great Apollo’ and great nature, sometimes themselves approaching Biblical feeling (with Apollo as Jehovah), yet diverging also, especially later, into a pantheism of such majesty that orthodox apologists may well be tempted to call it Christian too; but it is scarcely orthodox.⁹⁵

For the same essay, Knight’s epigraph is 1 Corinthians 15: 35, St. Paul’s meditation on resurrection, whose resonance for the end of the play Knight further suggests by writing that from Act Five “on, religious phraseology is insistent, with strong Christian tonings.”⁹⁶ Because of Knight’s own allusive, literary style, it is difficult to pin down the error in Knight’s simultaneous invocation and rejection of Christian orthodoxy. Knight is profitably aware of the potential for Christian meaning in the play, and rightly wary of an exclusive emphasis upon it. However, his attempt to argue that Act 5 is both pantheistic and centrally tied to so fundamental a Christian doctrine as resurrection demonstrates theological incompetence. Pantheism and supernatural Christian grace are such fundamentally opposed religious doctrines that, though both could be suggested by a text, it is unlikely that a text will grant them both equal importance or validity. Which takes precedence in The Winter’s Tale is a question to be considered within a close

reading of Act 5, but here it can also be noted that Frye errs on this question in a way similar to Knight, arguing that grace in this play “is not Christian or theological grace, which is superior to the order of nature, but a secular analogy of Christian grace which is identical with nature.”⁹⁷ Yet between these two theological extremes, the absolute transcendence of God’s grace and pantheism, Christian tradition also offers belief in the immanence of God’s grace within nature. This idea is fundamental to the sacramentalism of both the Catholic and the Anglican church, the two churches most likely to have influenced Shakespeare.⁹⁸ Theological ignorance is also suggested, in my view, when Felperin claims that because its “wicked are not reassuringly punished early, as they were in Pericles,” but rather the innocent “are struck down,” The Winter’s Tale is controlled “much less closely” than Pericles or Cymbeline by the “workings of the gods.”⁹⁹ Christians might argue, rather, that it is the very inclusion of truly tragic suffering in the The Winter’s Tale which makes the play’s conclusion all the more consonant with the Christian understanding of how real evil is vanquished. As Nevill Coghill argues in again comparing Shakespeare and Dante:

Any human harmony achieved out of distress can awaken overtones of joy on higher planes. It is a proof how strongly [Dante] held to a view of life as harmony that he learnt how to stretch Comedy to contain sorrow and evil, and yet to show them capable of resolution in love and joy. Measure for Measure and The Winter’s Tale are the extreme examples of this vision and power.¹⁰⁰

If The Winter’s Tale does portray innocent suffering and death, is providence in this play therefore less “in control” of events? Tom Driver might answer no, for he argues that Shakespeare often presents “an ordering purpose above the temporal process, indistinguishable in form from the Christian idea of Providence, which imposes the burden of choice upon man without abandoning history to chaos.”¹⁰¹ An interpreter’s Christian theological horizons can thus illumine the meaning of this play, though probably not before a dialectical debate over the meaning of both the text and Christian doctrine. As well, this debate must both attend to the many other aspects of The Winter’s Tale’s meaning, and heed Danby’s reminder that Shakespearean romance is “adjusted to the level of entertainment”¹⁰² by discussing this play as a dramatic performance rather than a theological treatise.

Conversely, again, interpreters such as Tillyard and Coghill can challenge Danby’s claim that Shakespearean romance “is not conceived at the same level of seriousness as Dante’s

Paradiso,¹⁰⁰ for judgment here depends on how seriously one takes the spiritual struggle enacted in The Winter's Tale, particularly in its Sicilian scenes. Although Shakespeare employs the cuckold's horns as a running joke throughout his work, he also took the problem of jealousy seriously enough to portray it in at least three major heroes before The Winter's Tale: Claudio, Othello, and Posthumous. Leontes differs from all three in at least two important respects: he is self-deceived rather than tricked by an Iago or Jachimo, and his fall into jealousy occurs much more rapidly than any of the others. Leontes' "curtness of speech" has been connected to the idea that he is jealous right from the start of the play,¹⁰¹ but--in contrast to Greene's Pandosto, whose jealousy is "a long time smothering in his stomach" (234)--Shakespeare may wish to emphasize the swiftness and irrationality of jealousy, and here be portraying Emilia's view that "jealous souls ... are not ever jealous for the cause, / But jealous for they're jealous" (3.4.158-60). Shakespeare does provide the utterly irrational motive which set Dionyza against Marina, as Leontes "mistakes Hermione's graciousness for unlawful love,"¹⁰⁵ though Coleridge is reported to have argued that Leontes' jealousy shows "the well defined effects and concomitants" of this "vice of the mind" even more realistically than in Othello.¹⁰⁶ For example, the "spasmodic jerks" of his language reveal Leontes as an individual "inwardly tormented,"¹⁰⁷ yet his jealousy may also represent the political problem of how "unchecked power from an early age" can cause "the pathology of monarchy."¹⁰⁸ Shakespeare may intend to universalize his problem even further, though, as an example of the general fall of humankind. The boyhood friendship of Leontes and Polixenes is a pastoral, Edenic world of pre-lapsarian innocence (1.2.67-71) in which, as two lads who are "boy eternal" (1.2.64), "the 'eternal' consciousness of childhood is distinguished from the sin-born time-consciousness of man."¹⁰⁹ Following a commonplace Renaissance interpretation of the fall, Polixenes attributes it to sexual passions (1.2.77-79), but Hermione lightheartedly says that she and all women will "answer" the sin if it not be committed as fornication or adultery (1.2.81-86). It is in an appeal to the passionate imagination of all men, however, that Leontes explicitly attempts to universalize his jealousy by almost directly addressing the audience:

And many a man there is (even at this present,
 Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,
 That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence,
 And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor--by

Sir Smile, his neighbor. (1.2.192-96)

One readily imagines, and could today still experience, men in the audience nervously half-grinning to each other while listening to Leontes, not wanting to be "Sir Smile," but wondering also whether they can trust their fellow spectator. Yet Leontes' incessant questioning of Camillo's ability to perceive Hermione's adultery-- "Ha' not you seen ... or heard ... or thought ... My wife is slippery" (1.2.267-73)--and his own hermeneutic of suspicion at any sexually suggestive word, such as "Satisfy" (1.2.233), foregrounds the individual error of his own perceptions. All of the audience are thus given a negative example of the "primacy of faith,"¹¹⁰ for as Leontes' "mistrust spreads, his contact with the real weakens proportionately, until, believing only in himself, he denies the heavens and stands wholly isolated in his own illusions."¹¹¹ Leontes' characterization, in sum, should not be seen as an unrealistic convention of plot, but rather a powerful *mimesis* of many of the characteristic traits and effects of jealousy. Perhaps most relevantly of all, Shakespeare presents jealousy as not just a matter of individual psychological anxiety, but as an ethical issue, a matter of "good and evil" (1.2.303), aptly enough called "sin" (1.2.283), which reveals Shakespeare's "central emphasis" upon "conjugal trust and fidelity" in Christian marriage.¹¹² Through the relationship of Leontes and Hermione, what Shakespeare sees as "the deepest issues of good and evil" are explored,¹¹³ and it is only a spectator singularly uninterested in loving one's spouse who can dismiss The Winter's Tale as irrelevant to understanding human reality.

If in Leontes Shakespeare shows us a supreme form of evil, through Hermione he shows us that "love-integrity is all but the supreme good."¹¹⁴ It is, of course, unsurprising that Shakespeare gives the better part to the female half of the marriage, as most of his most virtuous characters are women, and most of his comedies end happily because of the actions of these women. Yet no other play by Shakespeare can match The Winter's Tale for the three star roles it gives to women, especially since these women, except for Perdita's brief flight to Sicily in Act 4, do not use the convention of cross-dressing that empowers the heroines of Shakespeare's earlier comedies. Like these heroines, although to an even greater extent, the source of women's power in this play is the seamless combination of ethical wisdom and verbal eloquence so commended by Renaissance humanists, a product of the education generally unavailable to Tudor or Jacobean women. Whether by presenting these characters Shakespeare imaginatively subverts social reality

or simply observes common human behaviour seems a moot point beside the fact that these heroines “can please many and please long.”¹¹⁵ A late twentieth-century feminist finds in this play’s heroines “the subversive and creative power of love, art, and nature,”¹¹⁶ while early nineteenth-century critic Anna Jameson wittily and honestly praises Hermione as a character who “exhibits what is never found in the other sex, but rarely in our own--yet sometimes; dignity without pride, love without passion, and tenderness without weakness”; in her, “still waters run deep.”¹¹⁷ All of these qualities are most in evidence at her trial, where Hermione’s eloquent “integrity” (3.2.26) is “in every syllable” and she “wields a martyr-like strength,”¹¹⁸ primarily because--in stark contrast to Leontes after the oracle is read--she is completely unafraid to submit herself to divine judgment. Like all of the other moral characters in Shakespeare’s romances, she understands the power of patient virtue:

But thus, if pow’rs divine

Behold our human actions (as they do),

I doubt not then but innocence shall make

False accusation blush, and tyranny

Tremble at patience. (3.2.28-32)

“Apollo be my judge!” (3.2.115), Hermione concludes. When the oracle pronounces her innocent, she appears to die. We are then told that she has appeared in a dream to Antigonus (3.3.17). Critics familiar with medieval drama might see her transformed “from a human character to a saintly symbol of wronged innocence”; in the final scene, she takes on “‘allegorical significance’ as a figure of grace and forgiveness.”¹¹⁹ Hermione suggests a Christian purpose for her imprisonment when she says, “This action I now go on / Is for my better grace” (2.1.121-22). That her name means “pillarlike” or “steadfast and statuesque” further suggests allegory,¹²⁰ and later her “statue” artfully embodies her patient moral virtue. However, at play’s end Hermione provides a humanly possible, if unlikely, explanation by telling us that she “preserved [her]self” (5.3.127-28) during her long separation from Leontes. Although she points us to morality play virtues like “patience” (3.2.32), some find in her more “flesh and blood vitality” than in Cordelia or Desdemona,¹²¹ and argue that her “withdrawal from Leontes was motivated throughout by love, that she intended to return to him, but not until penitence had done its work.”¹²² Perhaps the key

point, again, is that neither Hermione's realistic qualities nor her moral virtues can be downplayed, as Gemma Jones fascinatingly discovered while playing Hermione in the early 1980s. Jones reports that she at first took the part reluctantly because it seemed to offer little to satisfy her "egotistical desire ... as an actress to impress; to act devious, clever, complicated and interesting";¹²³ thus, she says,

We improvised my playing the first scene guilty--as if Leontes has justifiable cause for suspicion--which is fun to play (very wicked and delicious), but observation on the exercise is that it is perverse and destructive to attempt to give Leontes a rational jealousy. Hermione must personify all that is pure and right in order to illuminate the irrationality of his jealousy and the extent of his loss.¹²⁴

Jones' theatrical discovery, in short, teaches us that misinterpretation of Hermione's virtue perverts the values which truly are mediated in The Winter's Tale.

A combination of symbolic and realistic qualities should also be seen in Paulina, whose importance to Shakespeare's design is suggested, first, because she is not in Greene and has no other clear literary source. We might see the source of Paulina as the clichéd feminine stereotypes of the "comic scold,"¹²⁵ but to Anna Jameson she is "a character drawn from real and common life," and a vivid representation of

a clever, generous, strong-minded, warm-hearted woman, fearless in asserting the truth, firm in her sense of right, enthusiastic in all her affections; quick in thought, resolute in word, and energetic in action; but heedless, hot-tempered, impatient, loud, bold, voluble, and turbulent of tongue; regardless of the feelings of those for whom she would sacrifice her life.¹²⁶

Jameson aptly describes the realistic qualities of many virtuous women, although her final words here suggest the uncommon Christian willingness to give "[one's] life for [one's] friend" (John 15: 13). Many of Paulina's other qualities, in fact, also recall her Christian namesake, St. Paul. Some might think this typology arbitrary, but Paulina shares so many traits with St. Paul, and she so frequently alludes to the Pauline letters, especially during the climactic moments of Act 5, that to see their names as related by coincidence is much more farfetched. Her barbed tongue and hot temper are traits both share, but even more important is the "single-mindedness"¹²⁷ that most see in her efforts to have Leontes repent; she shows Leontes "how the new Adam may emerge from the

old"¹²⁸ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22), and is indeed "repentance incarnate: that is her dramatic office."¹²⁹ In one key speech, however, Paulina actually tells Leontes not to repent, saying

I say she's dead; I'll swear't. If word nor
oath
Prevail not, go and see. If you can bring
Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,
Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods. But, O thou tyrant!
Do not repent these things, for they are heavier
Than all thy woes can stir[.] (3.2.203-09)

What might be taken as a decidedly anti-Christian call to despair can also be seen as Paulina employing hypothetical reasoning to offer a *memento mori*, similar to what St. Paul does in reminding us that "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15: 13-14). Here Paulina's stark empiricism seeks to convince Leontes of the reality of Hermione's death as strongly as she will later seek to impress his senses in the statue scene, and to convince him of the inability of even a powerful tyrant to make her live again. As well, she also faintly evokes a key rationale for the Christian faith--that if someone can bring resurrection from death, he is worthy to be served as divinity. Paulina then calls Leontes to an ascetic, flesh-mortifying, Pauline-like purgation, "A thousand knees, / Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting" (3.2.210-11) in which he will have no hope for reprieve from what, again, sound like pagan "gods." Yet when he humbly accepts her words (3.2.214-15) and she can see that "he is touch'd / To th' noble heart" (3.2.221-22), Paulina then speaks words of comfort: "What's gone and what's past help / Should be past grief" (3.2.222-23). This sudden reversal has puzzled some, but it too can be taken as a Pauline reminder of the value of compassionate forgiveness.

Paulina's reversal can also be seen, of course, as a reassertion of her role as a human, specifically female, character within this unique play, although she does evoke the stereotype of the female "scold" when she chides herself for having "show'd too much / The rashness of a woman" (3.2.220-21). This comment might be taken by a modern feminist as signifying an internal conflict between the powerful role she had assumed and the passive one assigned her by society; yet to

describe Paulina in ideological terms can lead to conclusions which obscure her fundamentally religious role at play's end, as Overton illustrates by arguing that

During the course of the action the three [heroines] have undergone not only the primary roles available specifically to women: as daughter, betrothed, wife, mother, widow. They have also suffered roles inflicted on women by male ideology and power: suspected adulteress, virago, witch, seductress. It is by reasserting their primary roles that they redeem not only themselves but the male world.¹³⁰

Paulina's primary role at play's end, however, is more priestess than grieving widow, and there again her language of redemption will confirm her more a votary of Christ than Apollo. A.P. Riemer, too, mistakes Paulina's importance at play's end by ignoring her Pauline associations and arguing that, finally, "we find that her function has been largely ceremonial and consolatory; she has demonstrated the possibility of hope, the reality of benevolence; but her control has been largely illusory."¹³¹ Consolation is a vital part of her role, and Paulina's role has been likened to the curative counselling given by Lady Philosophy in Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy.¹³²

Much more than the reality of benevolence, Paulina shows the reality of faith, in precisely the Pauline definition of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" (Heb. 11:1). It is faith in the oracle that Paulina works to restore in Leontes, as the statue scene makes clear. Before then, it is also true that Paulina represents not only "the pure Christian conscience," but also the "common sense" which is fundamental to so many of Shakespeare's heroines;¹³³ thus, her typological resonances with St. Paul do not prevent her from being a plausible female heroine. Unlike the chaste St. Paul, Paulina eventually remarries at the end of this comedy, and Overton valuably notices that "when Leontes calls on Paulina and Camillo to marry, Shakespeare renews an ancient comic convention. Much of the humour lies in recognizing its conventionality."¹³⁴ Much of the meaning of The Winter's Tale, though, also lies in recognizing the decidedly unconventional associations that Shakespeare has created between St. Paul and his central female character.

In addition to Paulina, 3.2 also presents biblical allusion through numerological details connected to the Oracle, details which suggest that its God is "both a nature-deity and transcendent ... both the Greek Apollo and the Hebraic Jehovah."¹³⁵ This god's "revelatory voice makes the hearer nothing" (3.1.1), as one of the messengers, Cleomines, reports

when he says that its “ear-deaf’ning voice ... so surpris’d my sense, / That I was nothing” (3.1.9-10), and as Paulina describes Leontes when she says that he should “betake [him] / To nothing but despair” (3.2.210). Yet “nothing” in Shakespeare can also act as “a cipher... standing in rich place,” multiplying the value of whatever has been said (WT 1.1.6-7). Paulina’s advice to Leontes, “Take your patience to you, / And I’ll say nothing” (3.2.231), recalls Cordelia’s invaluable decision to say “Nothing” (1.1.87) to Lear; similarly, though both are disguised and on the run, it is in moments of unselfish service that both Edgar and Imogen say, “I nothing am” (Lr. 3.3.21; Cym. 4.2.368). As well, both Lear’s and Leontes’ spiritual growth recalls Richard II learning that man “With nothing shall be pleas’d, till he be eas’d / With being nothing” (5.4.40-41). All of these Shakespearean nothings, for those with ears to hear, whisper in turn of St. Paul’s description of the Christian as one who is “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6: 11). More esoteric biblical numerology, too, has been suggested by Riemer, who notes that Cleomenes and Dion were absent for “twenty-three days” (2.3.192), and that Renaissance biblical “numerologists came to associate the number twenty-three with God’s vengeance on sinners.”¹³⁶ Even more strikingly,

The maximum angle of the sun’s declination from the equator is (in round figures) twenty-three degrees. When it reaches this point in its perambulations around the heavens, its seemingly uncontrolled motion is checked; it returns on its former path events of the most disastrous potential—the disappearance of the sun in winter, its uncontrolled ascent in summer, thereby threatening to parch the earth—are neither random nor chaotic, but governed by inflexible laws ... twenty three becomes, therefore, a number symbolic of providence *parexcellence*¹³⁷

Thus the seemingly arbitrary number chosen by Shakespeare actually demonstrates that the physical natural world is also a book of nature authored by the providence of God. This also holds true for the number sixteen, which “is a potent symbol for perfection, harmony, human greatness and divine providence,”¹³⁸ and hence the probable reason for the sixteen years which Leontes has to repent.

Few in a theatre audience are likely to grasp this numerology, but the play clearly moves “more and more toward the emblematic” in 3.3,¹³⁹ a scene which both confirms the truly tragic nature of the play to this point, and turns it toward comedy. We are prepared for 3.3 by the close

of 2.3, where Leontes commands that Perdita be taken to a place "where chance may nurse or end it" (2.3.183). Antigonus takes up the babe in the hope that "Wolves and bears" will prove merciful to her (2.3.186-87). 3.3 is thus set up as a test of the benevolence of fate and physical nature. When the "day frowns" and Antigonus exits "pursued by a bear" (3.3.54, 58), the plot appears to have reached a tragic conclusion, particularly when we shortly learn that the bear has eaten its prey and a sea storm has destroyed the ship that accompanied Paulina's unfortunate husband. At the very least, these events might be taken as evidence that the "heavens ... [are] angry" (3.3.5), and wreaking vengeance through nature against the sins of Leontes. Antigonus might also be seen as complicit in these sins, for Paulina had warned that his hands will be "unvenerable" if he ever calls Perdita by that "wrongfully imposed name of bastard"¹⁴⁰ which Leontes has given her. Indeed, Antigonus refers to the babe as "the issue of King Polixenes" (3.3.43-44) just before the bear pursues him. Further, Hermione in her dream says Antigonus shall never see Paulina again "For this ungentle business" (3.3.34). Battenhouse thus argues that he is eaten by a bear "in fulfillment of the symbolic fate which in the Bible came on the foolish ones who mocked the prophet Elisha" (cf. 2 Kgs 2:24).¹⁴¹ Some such implication is undeniable, though it seems a bit harsh given both Antigonus' unselfish willingness to lay down his life to "save the innocent babe" (2.3.167), and his singular willingness to have the god's "sacred wills be done" (3.3.7). As well as a biblical allusion, the bear "in folk memory was 'the majestic and luminous god of storms and sunshine,'" ¹⁴² so, like the men in his ship, Antigonus may also be a simply unfortunate victim of evil. His virtuous sacrifice, however, has decisively altered the course of the play by preserving Perdita.

3.3 also begins to show that art is more powerful than nature when two of the stock representatives of Shakespeare's happier genres, the wise, honest old Shepherd of pastoral and the "natural" or dimwitted Clown of comedy--here arbitrarily linked as father and son--find the lost babe Perdita. The Clown soothes the audience's sense of the tragic by relating comically, as perhaps only a "natural" could, how he saw the ship sink and the bear eat Antigonus, while the Shepherd delivers a classic tragicomic line that beautifully links the two halves of the play, telling his son: "Now bless thyself: thou met'st with / things dying, I with things new-born" (3.3.113-14). Bethell here notes that, "to bless oneself is to make the sign of the Cross, and by the Cross those who are dying in sin are reborn to righteousness."¹⁴³ The pair's willingness to "do good

deeds" (3.3.139) is also part of the moral upbringing which we later learn has meant that Perdita has "grown in grace" (4.1.24). Yet the Shepherd's and Clown's interpretation of the babe as a "changeling" who has brought "fairy gold" (3.3.118, 123) is also an entertaining use of folk myth common throughout Shakespeare, and in general these characters are far too close to stock literary types to be accepted either as real human beings or as Christian types. Rather, their role in this play, literally and figuratively, is to bury Antigonus (3.3.131-32) and the tragic action that has dominated the play so far, as well as to shift the play's setting and tone to the genres of pastoral and comedy that will dominate the rest of the play. Even the comic language of the Shepherd and Clown drives away the nightmare of Leontes' words, and thus 3.3 "wakes into semi-humorous prose, sturdy commonsense, and simple kindliness."¹⁴⁴ After such a terrifying opening, how happily--if ironically for Antigonus and his friends--that the Shepherd can close the scene by saying, "'Tis a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good deeds on't" (3.3.138-39).

An even more obviously emblematic scene follows, as for the first time in his career Shakespeare embodies the familiar iconographic topic that is a primary source for so much of his poetic imagery, Time. Shakespeare's dramaturgy here would have seemed archaic to his own audience, let alone to modern readers unfamiliar with allegory. Yet it is striking that "so much of The Winter's Tale's complex vision--a vision of human life and of human attempts to arrive at expression and understanding of that life--should come to us through the most obviously outmoded dramatic device in the whole melange of archaic and primitive materials that work to make up this play."¹⁴⁵ Many find this vision less realistic than in Shakespeare's tragedies and sonnets, in which "Time that gave doth now his gift confound" (Son. 60. 8), but in the romances Time is, in part, a "universal and inexorable power which through a cycle of procreation and destruction causes what may be called a cosmic continuity."¹⁴⁶ Time thus has the dual role of both "Destroyer" and "Revealer," common in Renaissance iconography and cited in "The Rape of Lucrece," where Time "nurseth all and murder'st all that are" (Luc. 929). It is this comprehensiveness that The Winter's Tale's Time conveys in its opening lines:

I, that please some, try all, both joy and
 terror
 Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
 Now take upon me, in the name of Time,

To use my wings. (4.1.1-4)

Time's complex syntax here convolutes simple understanding in the manner characteristic of Shakespearean romance. Nearer the end of his speech, Time introduces Florizel and Perdita. Soon, the audience learns that the procreation / destruction cycle is reversed in The Winter's Tale, and Time (which has first made error) will unfold it and allow the *veritas filia temporis* theme¹⁴⁷ to be revealed. This play's "two halves" thus present "two distinct kinds of time: the first, linear, impetuous, irrevocable, enemy to human aspirations; the second, cyclic, leisurely, restorative, in harmony with man's hopes."¹⁴⁸ When Time asks for our "patience ... allowing" the long passage of time in the play, we are reminded not only that patience "is the virtue most closely associated with time," and that its practice by the play's virtuous characters is vital to the play's conclusion, but also that patience is "oppugnant to time and therefore artificial or unnatural," like the figure Time who is teaching us; concurrently, this truth taught by art is crucial to human life because it makes "human suffering bearable or comprehensible."¹⁴⁹ Among the many ways one could describe Time's truths, perhaps most important, in both life and in The Winter's Tale, is that Time functions as both destroyer and revealer because "only by destroying spurious values can Time fulfill the office of unveiling Truth."¹⁵⁰ In life this destruction can take a very long time, so despite neoclassical objections the sixteen year time span may express a common fact of human life: it often takes a long period of time for error to be destroyed. Conversely, and less commonly in human life, Time is also able to "o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour / To Plant and o'erwhelm custom" (4.1.8-9), as the truth revealed at the end of this play vividly shows. To be able to perform such varied functions, Time in The Winter's Tale must be controlled by, or represent, a transcendent Divinity like that taught by Augustine and Boethius;¹⁵¹ as in the other romances, in this play Shakespeare is "converting the wheel of Fortune into the wheel of Providence."¹⁵²

Time's truth is thus justified by both nature and divinity, but certainly part of the objections it is responding to are the dictums of art found in the classical unities. It is probably to this charge that Time refers in asking us to "Impute it not a crime" that "I slide / O'er sixteen years" (4.1.4-6), and against which Time defends itself in saying:

Let me pass

The same I am, ere ancient'st order was,

Or what is now receiv'd. I witness to
 The times that brought them in; so shall I do
 To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale
 The glistering of this present, as my tale
 Now seems to it. (4.1.9-15)

Time here defends its tale which, because so obviously a romance, might seem “stale” and perhaps “irrelevant to reality.”¹⁵³ Yet because Time stands outside of time and witnessed what first brought about present reality--the times that brought in “what is now receiv'd” as everyday reality--it is also able to identify “th' freshest things now reigning” in that reality, and can thus make accustomed, everyday reality, the “glistering” present, itself seem stale. Time thus promises that the second half of the play, though filled with old romantic motifs, will present the freshest, most vital aspects of life that can be conveyed by art. As in Sonnet 76, what Shakespeare loves most is “as the sun, daily new and old” (l.13), and thus “old tales take on a new interest.”¹⁵⁴ After looking ahead to the play's actions, which will give “th' argument of Time” (4.1.29), Time closes both by benevolently wishing us well, and by asking us to reflect on the value of the time we will spend watching the play:

Of this allow,
 If ever you have spent time worse ere now;
 If never, yet that Time himself doth say,
 He wishes earnestly you never may. (4.1.29-32)

Young remarks that he feels “a little disarmed” to have “Time himself” say “that it is up to you to decide” if his story “is a profitable way to spend *time*.”¹⁵⁵ Yet, in many senses, Time's hypotheses leave no options for the audience, and we must all “allow” the plot of the play since we all will have suffered more than during its present performance, and the future happiness of all can only be revealed by Time. Given these facts, perhaps the audience should accept the happy though improbable events of the play's second half with the same cheerful hope that Time wishes for our own futures.

Time's complex poetry and philosophy are followed by a short, simple scene. 4.2 serves to preserve the play's unity by showing Camillo wishing to return to the Sicilia from which Time's wings have so far transported us. Also, this scene presents the conventional comic motif that will

govern much of the act's actions. A father, Polixenes, attempts to block the marriage of a young couple who at least appears "different in blood" (MND 1.1.135), one royal, the other the daughter of a shepherd. 4.3 also presents a conventional comic figure, the "vice figure" Autolycus, and it is with him that The Winter's Tale truly passes into the cheerful season which, to cite the songs of another pastoral play, is "the only pretty ring time ... sweet lovers love the spring" (AYL 5.3.19, 21).

Autolycus also is first shown singing of love, or rather of lust, with "the doxy over the dale" (4.3.2). This is an important distinction, for, like Touchstone in As You Like It, Autolycus is a bawdy, comical jester taken from no source, and invented precisely as a counterpoint to the romantic pastoralism of the sheep-shearing festival in 4.4. More profitably, Autolycus can be compared to Falstaff, for whom "a quart of ale" is also "a dish for a king" (4.3.7), and who similarly engages in whoring, highway robbery, and references to biblical figures such as the Prodigal Son (4.3.97). Autolycus combines two of these vices when, in a parody of the parable of the Good Samaritan,¹⁵⁶ he plays the beaten traveller in order to rob the Clown. Like Falstaff, Autolycus also often gets caught in lies which reveal his own cowardice, as when the Clown "bluntly punctures" his "in-joke" about his attacker's identity by quickly agreeing that there is "Not a more cowardly rogue in all Bohemia."¹⁵⁷ Both are upperclass, Falstaff being a Knight and Autolycus having worn "three-pile and served Prince Florizel"; for their vices, which they count as virtues, both are "whipped out of the court" (4.3.89). As for Falstaff upon Henry V's ascension, for Autolycus the raising of the Clown and the Shepherd to gentlemen in 5.2. leads to a command, "amend thy life" (5.2.154), which is consented to but never performed. To do so would alter the very nature of both, as Falstaff suggests by telling his prince, "'tis my vocation Hal, 'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation" (1H4 1.2.104-05). Similarly, Autolycus also considers his work a career, recounting how he has "flown over many knavish professions," and "settled only in rogue" (4.3.99-100). "For the life to come," both "sleep out the thought of it" (4.3.30).

This may be a blessing to all, for reform would alter these figures' vital dramatic role as the "reverent Vice" (1H4 2.4.453), that seemingly immoral character from medieval drama who is nevertheless vital to comedy's happy conclusion. The gentler Autolycus fits the role of vice even better than Falstaff, for after his double-crossing attempt both to extort money from the Shepherd and Clown and be paid by Florizel for taking them to him, everyone profits except him. Autolycus

is thus “virtually summing up his role”¹⁵⁸ when he sees the two rustics and says, “Here come those I have done good to against my will” (5.2.124). Just as the innocent suffer unjustly during the tragic first half of The Winter’s Tale, so in its comic half “the guilty are caught up in the restorative.”¹⁵⁹ As throughout the romances, the “heavens directing” (5.3.150) can be credited, even though Autolycus thinks it is “Fortune” which “drops booties in my mouth” (4.4.832); unlike Falstaff, then, “the sly knavery of Autolycus has nothing in it that is criminal; heaven is his accomplice.”¹⁶⁰

Although one can exaggerate the moral value of a vice figure, not even Autolycus’ lust is without purpose. Right from Autolycus’ first song, Shakespeare links him with Time’s “freshest things now reigning” by having Autolycus note that “the red blood reigns in the winter’s pale” (4.3.4). Spring shall prove more powerful than Winter, and Autolycus is “spring incarnate”¹⁶¹ whose songs lift the spirits of the audience by making us feel as carefree and happy as Autolycus himself. In the midst of a long play that is filled with real tragedy, we do need to hear

Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,
And merrily hent the stile-a;
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a. (4.3.123-26)

The actor playing Autolycus, then, has a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to lighten the audience’s mood, particularly through his frequent asides and sly remarks. In William Burton’s 1856 production, where the director himself played Autolycus,

The sly humour of the rogue oozed out so quaintly that if it were not for the recognition he gave to the audience in the shape of a nod or a wink ... one would think it equally unconscious as spontaneous. Never did actor admit an audience more confidentially and unreservedly into his secrets ... his wink seemed directed to each particular person; and it was only the universal roar which disturbed each one’s delusion that he was himself the special confidant.¹⁶²

Moments like these make Autolycus memorable to theatre audiences, but for scholars he also contributes to the meaning and value of The Winter’s Tale by directing us to classical myth. Autolycus recalls that his “father nam’d [him],” and that he “was litter’d under Mercury” (4.3.25); Autolycus was known to Shakespeare from Book Eleven of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, where he is

the consequence of Mercury outwitting Apollo and seducing Chione.¹⁶⁴ Autolycus “in theft and filching had no peer” (*Met* xi. 359-63), while the subsequent coupling of Apollo and Chione also produces a twin, Philammon, who is a renowned singer. Never one to waste a source, Shakespeare’s Autolycus “represents the two boys rolled into one.”¹⁶⁴

Similarly entertaining uses of Ovid abound in 4.4, the heart of *The Winter’s Tale*’s pastoral. When we first see Perdita, however, Florizel calls her “Flora,” the Roman goddess of flowers absent from the *Metamorphoses*. He also announces her role as divinity’s bearer of spring by saying that she is “Peering in April’s front,” and that the “sheep-shearing” festival is “as a meeting of the petty gods, / And you the queen on’t” (4.4.4). The bringer of spring in Ovid is Proserpina, the chaste daughter of Ceres (goddess of fertility) who was gathering flowers when her infatuated uncle, Pluto, or “Dis,” raped her and took her to the underworld. Long lost but eventually found by her grieving mother, Proserpina the reluctant queen returns each year to the upper world to bring spring. Perdita dedicates to Ovid’s heroine the flowers she will give out, saying “O Proserpina, / For the flow’rs now, that, frighted, thou let’st fall / From Dis’s waggon!”; then, citing the “Violets blew” and “Lillies white” (*Met* 5. 491-92) that Proserpina had been picking when taken by lust, now it is the flowers that “take / The winds of March with beauty” (4.4.120) and thus bring spring. Perdita’s flowers also evoke Proserpina’s underworld melancholy and suggest that it is caused by the fact that her chastity was never taken by true love; Perdita laments “pale primeroses” that “die unmarried, ere they can behold / Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady most incident to maids)” (4.4.122- 25). Perdita’s parenthesis here also plays off other Ovidian allusions in this scene, particularly Florizel’s likening of himself to Apollo, who in search of love became “a poor humble swain, / As I seem now” (4.4.30-31). Perhaps, Florizel’s wooing of Perdita is “part of the pattern” which will “lead to the fulfillment of Apollo’s oracle.”¹⁶⁵

Indeed, many of the allusions in 4.4 lead one to read the first three acts as winter and the last two as spring, although to do so is “to oversimplify”¹⁶⁶ the way Shakespeare’s art adapts these allusions to *The Winter’s Tale*’s dramatic world. In fact, the whole sheep-shearing festival, which normally would occur in late June, moves “from spring to summer, under a burning sun,” and has “a sharp realism.”¹⁶⁷ Florizel’s allusion to Apollo, for example, also evokes the dangers of lust, and creates interest in whether it is true that his “desires Run not before [his] honor, nor [his]

lusts / Burn hotter than [his] faith" (4.4.33-35). Also, Perdita's speech on Proserpina's flowers, so vivid that audiences find these flowers "more 'real', more memorable"¹⁶⁸ than the flowers of middle age that Perdita has handed to Camillo and Polixenes (4.4.74-75), actually closes by lamenting that, "O these I lack / To make you garlands of ... To strew him o'er and o'er" (4.4.127-29). Unsurprisingly, Florizel associates this image with death, and asks "What? like a corse?" (4.4.129), though Perdita responds with a comforting image likening her playful sexuality to nature, saying she will be "like a bank, for love to lie and play on" (4.4.130). Later, Autolycus' bawdy ballads will replace the chaste pastoralism of the shepherds' dance, but do these songs lead to carefree play for the simple shepherdesses Mopsa and Dorcas? They think the ballads true because "they are in print" (4.4.260), yet the supposedly "merry" ballad of "two maids wooing a man" which they sing to Autolycus ends with both girls disillusioned and abandoned. Can we have any more faith in the ballad of love being sung by Florizel and Perdita? The peddler goes on selling and the twelve satyrs begin a dance which can be described positively as "the non-rational, Dionysian forces at work in the universe and in human personality;"¹⁶⁹ but, Autolycus is dangerous enough to human community to bring finally an angry Polixenes out of his disguise. His final line leaves the image of death looming ominously as he "threatens the dispatch of Perdita to the underworld"¹⁷⁰ if she does not leave Florizel alone, saying "I will devise a death as cruel for thee / As thou art tender to't" (4.4.440-41).

4.4 then, is not the pure, pristine pastoralism that Proserpina enjoyed before she was captured, where there was "continuall spring" (*Met* 5. 490). Nevertheless, by its "piedness," its remarkable variety, this scene's art "shares / With great creating nature" (4.4.87) and allows tragedy to be avoided. Like the "Whitsun pastorals" (4.4.134), which were "a country celebration of man's kinship with nature," the scene is "a delightful emblem" for the way nature and art mingle.¹⁷¹ Its fundamental philosophical principle is the famous passage where Polixenes teaches Perdita that there is "an art / Which does mend Nature," but "The art itself is Nature" (4.4.95-96). The irony of Polixenes advising the joining of "a gentler scion to the wildest stock" (4.4.93) is often noted; in fact, all through the scene the art of literary allusion is joined to nature, especially human nature, mending a new organic world. Art allows Florizel to graft his name onto Perdita, letting her become Queen Flora, which her down to earth common sense mocks as being "goddess-like prank'd up" (4.4.10). In fact, Perdita's role is more complex than "she can imagine

or express"; here, "a boy actor plays a princess who thinks she is a shepherdess playing a May Queen" who yet knows not to take her role seriously.¹⁷²

Much of 4.4's meaning is conveyed by performance, as it often functions "largely through music, dance, laughter, song, and color."¹⁷³ Throughout this scene and indeed the entire play, we are reminded that we "are watching a staged performance."¹⁷⁴ Yet so often in 4.4, artificial conventions are organically integrated into the dramatic situation. Thus Camillo's out of character, punning romantic pastoralism--"I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing" (4.4.109)--is deflated by Perdita's naturalistic realism: "You'd be so lean, that blasts of January / Would blow you through and through" (4.4.111-12). Undaunted, Florizel pledges an unchanging romantic love for Perdita's intrinsic natural beauty by seeing in the art of her dance the constant processes of nature:

When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function. (4.4.140-43)

Nature provides another image for love when Florizel takes Perdita's hand to lead her to the dance, saying, "So turtles pair that never mean to part," while she responds, "I'll swear for 'em" (4.4.154-55). Within this natural image, there might also be an allusion to the Song of Songs, which speaks of turtledoves (2:12) and tells us that "much water cannot quench love" (8:6-7).¹⁷⁵ Against Polixenes' threats, this truth is precisely what these lovers demonstrate, though both their human natures are tested in this scene. Perdita has shown that she is not "angling for a prince," that "her love is not self-seeking,"¹⁷⁶ leading Jameson to commend especially her "love of truth" and "conscientiousness."¹⁷⁷ Florizel is tempted not only sexually but by "the alternatives of entrusting his ship to chance or to the sagacious pilot Camillo."¹⁷⁸ When together, they choose the latter; finally both can exult in the integrity of their love. Perdita responds to the hope provided by Camillo by saying, "How often [I] said my dignity would last / But till 'twere known!" (4.4.475), while Florizel reaffirms that this dignity

cannot fail, but by
The violation of my faith, and then
Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together,

And mar the seeds within! (4.4.476-79)

Because Florizel has not “marred” Perdita, this couple, though unmarried, can travel in disguise to Sicilia without violating each other’s dignity. Yet their chastity is hardly cold, and we might concur with Irving Babbitt’s view that the lines in which Camillo wishes the lovers, “a wild dedication of yourselves / To unpath’d waters, undream’d shores ...” (4.4.566-67), are “the most romantic lines in English literature.”¹⁷⁹ On a more ethical level, in contrast to Leontes’ jealousy their “faith” here shows “what remains when men and women set aside the artificial trappings of their love and seek the seed within which binds them to all forms of ongoing life.”¹⁸⁰

Camillo himself, like Paulina preserving Hermione, also shows the integrity of his own nature by allowing the lost “seed” Perdita to be found, to return to Sicilia and be welcome “As is the spring to th’ earth” (5.1.152). 4.4 then closes with another example of the opposite of this integrity, Autolycus attempting to con the Shepherd and the Clown. But, by this point, the audience’s mood has been rescued from cynicism or despair. 4.4’s sheep-shearing festival has not only provided a tremendously entertaining “set-piece” which can stand by itself, but it is also “a means of marking or telling time, one that goes by seasonal event (the harvesting of wool)” in order to establish “a vital counterpoint between the rhythms of external nature and the rhythms of human life.”¹⁸¹ These rhythms reveal not only “something of the inevitability of natural process itself,”¹⁸² but also an artistry that requires the natural dramatic art of the theatre itself. 4.4 thus not only “unifies” the play’s complex plot, but moreover infuses it with sunshine, laughter, and a suspenseful hope that yet more wonders lie ahead when Camillo and the lovers return to Sicilia.

In Leontes’ kingdom, 5.1 first suggests, little has changed in sixteen years. Although Leontes has performed “a saint-like sorrow” (5.1.2), Paulina must still work to persuade him not to disobey the oracle by marrying before the lost child is found. Even one of the messengers who went to the oracle, Cleomenes, has forgotten its command and advises Leontes to marry and breed an heir. To die heirless would for a king be the “supreme punishment,”¹⁸³ but Paulina stresses that in this instance to marry would be to oppose the wills of the gods. Leontes must “learn to trust” that the heavens will provide an heir¹⁸⁴ (5.1.44-49). Thus Cleomenes’ initial advice—that Leontes do “as the heavens have done, forget your evil, / With them, forgive yourself” (5.1.5-6)—can be seen as the clichéd notion of forgiveness, “forgive and forget,” and rejected in favor of the Christian, Pauline view which stresses that a repentant person must clearly remember his or her

sins in order to seek forgiveness (cf. 2 Cor. 7: 8-11), as Leontes will with Polixenes when they meet (5.2.52). Thus, much of what happens to Leontes in the last act serves to make his past “wrongs ... stir afresh within” him (5.1.148-49), as when he first sees Florizel and the party from Bohemia. The long-lasting effects of sin, too, are briefly hinted at when Leontes casts a lascivious eye upon Perdita before her identity is revealed; in contrast to Greene, though, Shakespeare here shows as little interest in exploring the possibility of incest between father and daughter as in Pericles. Rather, Shakespeare maintains the suspense of the romance plot--the sea’s “dreadful Neptune” (5.1.154) and the dangers of “Fortune” continuing to test the lovers--and Leontes thus accepts the unselfish role of advocate for the lovers to Polixenes. Then his excuse to Paulina, that he actually thought of Hermione, “in these looks I made” (5.1.228), reminds all of Leontes’ real, vivid hope for his former wife, a hope that Paulina firmly implants within him.

In 5.2 we learn of the reunion of Leontes, Camillo, Polixenes, and his out-of-disguise daughter. Shakespeare, perhaps having learned from Pericles and Cymbeline the difficulty of maintaining intense emotion in consecutive recognition scenes, here permits three nameless gentlemen to report the meeting. Critics often note that this scene’s second-hand prose report by anonymous characters “stimulates an eagerness in the audience actually to see such a reunion” between the play’s central characters,¹⁸⁵ and we are told that missing the meeting of the two kings was to have “lost a sight which was to be seen” and “cannot be spoken of” (5.2.42-43). Yet Shakespeare gives the gentlemen’s prose such allusive poetic power that we almost see, rather than hear, the second hand report. We are asked to imagine vividly the non-verbal aspects, the *actio*, that occur when Leontes and Camillo “seem’d almost, with staring on one another, to tear the cases of their eyes. There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture” (5.2.11-14); when the two kings met, “there was casting up of eyes, holding up of hands, with countenance of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favor” (5.2.46-49); after Leontes “embraces his son-in-law,” he then “worries his daughter with clipping her” (5.2.53-54). In all of these reports there is such vivid exuberance that it is somewhat inaccurate to say that this scene “delimits the senses of sight and hearing in order to affirm the superiority of the ‘speaking picture’ of drama,”¹⁸⁶ though it is true that Shakespeare here educates his audience in the dramatic language of emotion that makes reunion and recognition scenes so much more than simply physical meetings. Rather, these meetings bring “amazedness” (5.2.5), a “passion of wonder” (5.2.16),

such “wonder ... that balladmakers cannot be able to express it” (5.2.24-25). Yet tragicomedy does not allow for the emotion to be simply happiness, and it cannot readily be said whether there was “joy or sorrow” (5.2.18) at Leontes’ and Camillo’s meeting. In Paulina, there is a “noble combat ... ’twixt joy and sorrow” (5.2.72-73) because the oracle has been fulfilled, yet her husband is lost. When the two kings met, one “beheld one joy crown another” yet “it seem’d sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears” (5.2.44-46). Leontes is “ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter,” but then it is “as if that joy were now become a loss” for he cries, “O, thy mother, thy mother!” (5.2.49-52). This emotion, in turn, produces “one of the prettiest touches of all” (5.2.82), one whose poetry is most clearly designed also to produce physical tremors of emotion in the audience, so that when Leontes tells Perdita of her mother’s death:

how attentiveness wounded his daughter, till (from one sign of dolor to another) she did (with an “Alas!”), I would fain say, bleed tears; for I am sure my heart wept blood. Who was most marble there chang’d color; some swounded, all sorrow’d. If all the world could have seen’t, the woe had been universal. (5.2.87-92)

The sense of universality of the woe, and of the remedy which shall yet turn it to joy, is also frequently suggested in 5.2 by “strong Christian tonings”¹⁸⁷ whose allusions, given Jacobean censorship, could hardly be clearer, though they are frequently embedded within imagery characteristic of Shakespearean romance. Losing / finding imagery, for example, which D.G. James argues forms the “essential myth” throughout the romances,¹⁸⁸ is central to the Christian faith, both in direct formulations in which Christ promises that “whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it” (Matt. 16: 25), and in the parables of Luke 15, all three of which portray a passage from loss and sorrow to new found joy, and which in the parable of the prodigal son shows a child who “was dead, and is alive again ... was lost, but he is found” (Luke 15: 31). Very often, Shakespeare closely links losing / finding imagery in The Winter’s Tale to the play’s Christian tragicomic motifs. For example, in 5.1 Paulina asks Leontes: is it not true 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 Antigonous to break his grave,

And come again to me; (39-43)

This speech vividly suggests the image of resurrection, but seems to present it as impossible; Antigonus never does return, but when in 5.2 Perdita is found, we hear how his sacrifice helped make this possible. There, "all the instruments which aided to expose the child were even then lost when it was found" (5.2.70-72); so perhaps this finding should make us doubt our reliance on commonplace human reason. Twice in 5.2 and again in 5.3, the events are described as "so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (5.2.28-29; 5.3.116-17). Undoubtedly, these lines are part of Shakespeare's strategy to remind his audience that this is "just" fiction. Given what happens in 5.3 might it not also suggest Luke 24:11,¹⁸⁹ in which when the holy women reveal that Jesus was not in his grave, "their words seemed to [the apostles] as idle tales and they believed them not."¹⁹⁰ The cross of Christ, St. Paul noted, is "foolishness" to the rational Greeks (1 Cor. 1: 23), but on it Christ gave "his life for the ransom of many" (Matt. 20:28). As the One who "is able to save, and to destroy" (Jas. 4:12), Christ promises, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Winter's Tale closely echoes this Biblical understanding of how the old passes into the new at the meeting of Camillo and Leontes, where "they look'd as they had heard of a world ransom'd, or one destroy'd" (5.2.14-15). The closest allusion to Christian joy is again to St. Paul's 1 Corinthians 15, an allusion made in the crucial final lines of the First Gentleman, who exits by urging that all should go to Paulina's for the unveiling of the statue:

Who would be thence that has the benefit
of access? Every wink of an eye some new grace
will be born. Our absence makes us unthrifty to our
knowledge. (5.2.109-112)

The general Christian sense of grace here could be explicated in a number of ways, but it is a particularly clear allusion¹⁹¹ to St. Paul's vision of judgment day:

Behold, I show you a secret thing, We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall blowe,
and the dead shall be raised up incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.

(1 Cor. 15: 51-52)

Not every aspect of these lines corresponds, of course, for Shakespeare's play remains drama rather than biblical commentary. Yet given the nature of the events in 5.3 that are here forecast, the

Christian meaning in the First Gentleman's "wink of an eye" and "new grace" is undeniable, and to fail to see Christian meaning in what Paulina there asks us to behold will certainly be "unthrifty to our knowledge".

5.2 thus prepares us to see The Winter's Tale's famous, climactic statue scene as primarily a resurrection scene rather than a recognition or reunion scene. Other literary works may also have suggested this scene, notably Euripides' Alcestis, Chariton's Chaereas and Callirhoe,¹⁹² Ovid's tale of Pygmalion, and the Hermetic Asclepius, but interpretations of The Winter's Tale which take no account of its Christian connotations can obscure key aspects of its meaning. For example, Bate writes that "Shakespeare and his audience would have thought of the story of Pygmalion as the archetype for the animation of a statue,"¹⁹³ and argues that from this story Shakespeare learned, "If you want something badly enough and you believe in it hard enough, you will eventually get it."¹⁹⁴ However, at the moment in The Winter's Tale where the kissing of Pygmalion is most clearly alluded to, Paulina undercuts Bates' view by affirming the reality of Hermione's death and challenging Leontes,

If you can bring
Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,
Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods. (3.2.204-07)

Paulina's hypothesis here serves, like the Bible, to insist that the power to give life is an attribute of divinity, not humanity. Further, in 5.3 Leontes does move to kiss the statue, an action which certainly recalls Pygmalion. Yet again Paulina, in an action reminiscent of the *noli me tangere* theme in the resurrection scenes of the Corpus Christi plays,¹⁹⁵ stops him from doing so (5.3.82). Unlike Pygmalion, Leontes cannot wish or kiss Hermione back to life.

A.P. Riemer, meanwhile, argues for the relevance of the Asclepius, in which the neoplatonic sage Hermes Trismegistus explains to his disciple Asclepius how priests of ancient Egypt made gods when they "invoked the souls of daemons, and implanted them in the statues by means of certain holy and scared rites."¹⁹⁶ This text may be directly alluded to in Pericles (see Ch. 3 above), but Riemer, developing suggestions of Frances Yates,¹⁹⁷ makes far greater claims for its relevance to The Winter's Tale, arguing that "it is against these aspects of the Platonic tradition that we must view [its] final scene."¹⁹⁸ However, Riemer fails to account for the obviously

unorthodox aspects of Hermetic theology--the attempt to make gods or invoke demons--that are never suggested by Paulina. In fact, she explicitly "protest[s] against" the claim that she is "assisted / By wicked powers" (5.3.90). Riemer presents Paulina as a neoplatonic "magus" by arguing that Shakespeare could have intended her to be using white magic (as Prospero does); but Paulina's denial of wicked powers again links her to St. Paul, who condemns the use of witchcraft (Gal. 5: 20). Moreover, as an example of the Renaissance neoplatonism which The Winter's Tale supposedly mirrors,¹⁹⁹ Riemer cites the influence of Nicholas of Cusa's theory of "learned ignorance," which supposedly argues that it is "not an act of faith, involving a suspension of reason, that should make us assent to the infinite greatness of God's realm, but reason itself should teach us that in the hands of omnipotence all is possible."²⁰⁰ Paulina, however, has spoken of how the notion of resurrection is "monstrous to our human reason" (5.1.141), and the quality which she actually demands in 5.3 again echoes a frequent theme of St. Paul's (cf. Heb. 11), as just before the statue moves, Paulina tells Leontes--and by implication, the audience--"It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-95). Still, the crucial question remains, "faith" in what, or in whom? As one critic puts it:

By presenting us with what appears initially to be a work of art, an illusion of reality, but which, following the awakening of Leontes' faith, proves to be reality itself, Shakespeare raises for our final consideration the truth and credibility of what we have seen-- the truth that is figured forth in the play itself and the act of believing that it requires of us.²⁰¹

One approach to this question that can immediately be ruled out is Levin's, which would argue that this scene simply represents a "literal representation of individual characters and actions."²⁰² So many critics have found so much meaning beyond the literal that Levin's own belief that "new readings" must prove their case against the "majority of viewers and readers down to the present" makes his interpretation easily the most difficult to justify.²⁰³ As well, Paulina's requirement of faith invalidates Frye's claim that "the world we are looking at in the conclusion of The Winter's Tale is not an object of belief so much as an imaginative model of desire."²⁰⁴ In reaction to Frye's Blakean emphasis on human desire, however, some interpreters ask that we have faith in a religious form of literalism, and ardently reject seeing the "resurrection" of Hermione as a "symbolic rebirth."²⁰⁵ Rather, such critics argue, the play stresses that she was

really dead, and that we must see "the miracle of resurrection,"²⁰⁶ and not reduce this vision so as to avoid being "scandalized" by her "flesh-and-blood" resurrection.²⁰⁷ Such interpretations are unsurprising reactions to those who ignore the scene's religious dimension, but they are also unconvincing. While it is true that Hermione's return must be "far less mundane than appeals to Paulina's household can suggest,"²⁰⁸ the play's text clearly presents the possibility that Hermione has simply been hidden away all those years. The Second Gentleman says that "ever since the death of Hermione," Paulina "hath privately twice or thrice a day ... visited that remov'd house" where the statue now is (5.2.105-08), and after coming forward Hermione says "I ... preserved myself" (5.3.127-28). Even more importantly, in a literal Christian resurrection, Hermione would not show the ravages of time, but rather would be "raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15: 44). Marshall also exaggerates theological claims for the final scene by arguing, despite the clear scriptural teaching which says that there will be no marriage in the resurrection (Matt. 22:30), that Shakespeare here "offers an ideal ending--theatre's eschatology--that restores human attachments."²⁰⁹ However, Mamillius and Antigonus are never restored, although Florizel and Camillo do soften the blow of their loss. Finally, Christian meaning in the scene must be described with greater theological *and* dramatic accuracy. Bethell wisely argues that Hermione's return "is a carefully prepared symbol of spiritual and actual resurrection" rather than "a genuine resurrection."²¹⁰ One can also accept Rosalie Colie's eloquently argued view that in the statue scene:

Beauty's perfection, exemplified in Perdita's smooth cheek, gives way before the meaning and pathos of those wrinkles--even the ideal beauty of a mode emphasizing aesthetic ideals retires before the values attributed to suffering and feeling, validated by being experienced before time.... Wrinkles are the anti-romantic attributes of mature life: if Hermione is to be restored to Leontes with any significance to that restoration, she must return at time's full cost, her loss made calculable and conscious. The wrinkles are signs that suffering really means.²¹¹

Still the question remains, what does the play ask us to have "faith" in? Another common answer is "art," whether meant literally, as in reference to the statue, or as homage to Shakespeare's creative powers.²¹² One other allusion in 5.2 which prepares us for this question, however, is the reference to Julio Romano. An actual sixteenth-century painter and pupil of

Raphael, the Third Gentleman commends him because "he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer" (5.2.100-02). On the one hand this reference might cause us to see in 5.3's statue a perfect fulfillment of "Jonson's mimetic empiricism and Sidney's mimetic idealism ... perfectly faithful to nature even as it brings forth a second nature,"²¹³ or at the very least a fulfillment of Polixenes' notion that in the best art, "the art itself is nature" (4.4.97). Yet, we learn that there is no actual statue. Perhaps by falsely exalting Romano, Shakespeare pokes fun at the "assumption that perfect imitation is the highest reach of skill the artist can attain."²¹⁴ Love's Labour's Lost had argued that "*imitari* is nothing" (5.2.125-26), and "the artist as nature's ape" might not be an image likely to appeal to Shakespeare after he so clearly violates the classical dictum that the source of the three unities is nature. In 5.3 we also "begin to hear the word 'mocked'" being used "in its dual sense of copying and making fun,"²¹⁵ and the whole scene further suggests the sense in which "mock" means not quite "to copy" but rather "to pretend or feign in a delusive manner."²¹⁶ Yet if being "mock'd with art" (5.3.68) means that we are simply fooled in the statue scene, what power can art have to represent truth, or to restore life?

If the power of art is thus undercut, then for many critics what The Winter's Tale asks us to have faith in is not art but, rather, human ethical action. The play shows "the miraculous restorative powers of love,"²¹⁷ "the humane moral artifice of Paulina,"²¹⁸ "how it is possible to love and to forgive";²¹⁹ finally, such critics believe that Shakespeare asks "only that we should have a certain faith in humankind, in its resilience and its capacity to start again."²²⁰ Certainly, both Leontes and the play's audience are asked to gain faith in the humane values that Paulina teaches. Yet to focus exclusively on these values excludes the Christian meanings which Shakespeare takes such pains to include. As numerous critics note, Shakespeare's concluding emphasis in The Winter's Tale again follows St. Paul's 1 Cor. 15, where we learn that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death" (1.26). How we might describe Shakespeare's traditional, yet unique, vision of the battle against death is usefully suggested by Harold Goddard, whose study of The Winter's Tale leads him to reflect that

The defeat of death is the main problem of humanity. That defeat may be effected either by the direct imitation of divinity by man (the way of religion) or by the indirect imitation of it through the creation of divine works (the way of art), though practically it

must be a combination of the two, for it is only the religion that speaks artistically that is articulate and only the art that is pervaded by a religious spirit that is redeeming.²²¹

Instead of concluding, then, that The Winter's Tale's obviously artistic *mimesis* asks us to have faith solely in art, humane values, or Christian doctrine, we might see in the statue scene the characteristic Shakespearean capacity of using drama vividly to suggest the value of all of the above. As Shakespeare often provides, there is a line in the play so rich as to connote all of these meanings; when Paulina unveils the statue, she calls us to appreciate its full wonder by telling us to "prepare / To see the life as lively mock'd as ever / Still sleep mock'd death" (5.3.18-20).

If we accept the polysemous meanings of this line and enter Paulina's "poor house" expecting a "surplus of grace" (5.3.6-7), then we will share Leontes' reverent "silence" and more "show off [our] wonder" (5.3.21-22) by striving to understand how Paulina prepares him fully to appreciate Hermione's return. Again, as Leontes himself notes, his "evils [are] conjur'd to remembrance" (5.3.40), and he asks himself, "does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it" (5.3.37-38). Here, Noble suggests an apt biblical allusion: "Thou hast consulted shame to thine owne house, by destroying many people, and hast sinned against thine own soule. For the stone shall cry out of the wall" (Hab. 2: 10-11).²²² Certainly this anguish is exactly what Paulina intends Leontes to feel, though with spiritual cunning she claims not to have known that it "would thus have wrought him" (5.3.57). An actor must be extremely talented to physically express Leontes' "passionate speechless emotion" here,²²³ but regardless, an audience may appreciate the careful preparation by which Shakespeare brings his audience "almost to the pitch of revelation, saving just so much surprise, and leaving so little, that when they see the statue they may think themselves more in doubt than they really are whether it is Hermione herself or no."²²⁴

This sense of identification might be lost after the unlikely and surprising moment where Paulina calls upon the statue to move, but she does so in a way we remember from Pericles' Cerimon, who uses a similar instrument to awaken one who seems dead: "Music! awake her! strike!" (5.3.98). Again, we can see this as the neoplatonic "music of the spheres" (though twentieth-century directors have also played Pachelbel's "hauntingly sacred and infinitely gentle" music here as well).²²⁵ A significance similar to Pericles' sleep has already been suggested by Paulina's just cited simile--that the statue will mock life in as lively a fashion "as still sleep ever mocked death"--a phrase which recalls the Pauline metaphor of death as sleep, and the insight that

the risen Christ is “the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor: 15: 20). This play’s Christian theology then becomes as explicit as censorship would allow, or as would be desirable for evoking the marvelous mystery of resurrection, when Paulina then says:

'tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come;
I'll fill your grave up. Stir; nay, come away;
Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
Dear life redeems you. (5.3.99-103)

Here Paulina indirectly evokes the gaping sepulchre of the resurrected Christ, and takes upon herself the role of Mary Magdalene promising to roll back the stone;²²⁶ she then clarifies these Christian suggestions by crediting “Dear life” with this miracle. Used together with the word “redeems,” and just after Paulina has said, “it is requir’d / You do awake your faith” (5.3.94-95), this personification strongly suggests that our faith should be in deity more specific than Knight’s “Life itself.”²²⁷ “I am the resurrection, and the life,” Jesus says, and then promises Martha that she may again see her dead brother Lazarus, for “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Analogously, in The Winter’s Tale it is through faith that “Dear Life” redeems even those people, like Leontes and Hermione, whom sin has turned cold as stone. Numerous religious references follow The Winter’s Tale’s wondrous moment of resurrection. We are told that Hermione’s “actions shall be holy” (5.3.104), and that Perdita must kneel and pray for her mother’s blessing. Hermione, in turn, calls upon the gods to “pour [their] graces / Upon my daughter’s head” (5.3.123-24).

Theologically enlivening as all of these lines are, this scene is perhaps most inspiring onstage. Helen Faucit beautifully describes the experience of playing Hermione in an 1837 production to Macready’s Leontes; his

passionate joy at finding Hermione really alive seemed beyond control. Now he was prostrate at her feet, then enfolding her in his arms. I had a slight veil or covering over my head and neck supposed to make the statue look older. This fell off in an instant. The hair, which came unbound, and fell on my shoulders, was reverently kissed and caressed. The whole change was so sudden, so overwhelming, that I suppose I cried out hysterically, for he whispered to me, “Don’t be frightened my child! don’t be

frightened! Control yourself!" All this went on during a tumult of applause that sounded like a storm of hail. Oh, how glad I was to be released, when, as soon as a lull came, Paulina, advancing with Perdita, said, "Turn, good lady, our Perdita is found." A broken, trembling voice, I am sure, was mine, as I said, "You gods, look down," etc. It was such a comfort to me, as well as true to natural feeling, that Shakespeare gives Hermione no words to say to Leontes, but leaves her to assure him of joy and forgiveness by look and manner only, as in his arms she feels the old life, so long suspended, come back to her again.²²⁸

The theatrical power of this scene again serves to remind us that however mythical The Winter's Tale might seem, it is deeply rooted in the natural human world, albeit one guided by the supernatural, the "heavens directing" (5.3.150), and infused with wondrous art. Everything confirms Leontes' hope that this is "an art / Lawful as eating" (5.3.110-111), and Paulina's insistence that her spell is "lawful" (5.3.105) again recalls St. Paul's faith, that through grace "All things are lawful unto me" (1 Cor. 6:12). Frye inaccurately separates supernatural grace and the natural world, though, and thus mistakenly likens The Winter's Tale to "what its ritual predecessors tried to do by the identity of sympathetic magic," and misguidedly claims that its ending "is clearly not the world of ordinary experience, in which man is an alienated spectator."²²⁹ This play does not end with the world of common experience; yet, just as its initial portrayal of human sin and suffering is realistic, so, too, the conclusion portrays a world in which it becomes plausible that human virtue aided by divine grace can allow many of the play's characters to become "precious winners all" (5.3.131). Leontes' final matching of Camillo with Paulina might seem an arbitrary comic ending; but, not only is it a humorous rejoinder to Paulina's resolution to be like "an old turtle" and "lament" the loss of Antigonus (5.3.132-134), it is also justified by the similar character and actions of the two counsellors. As well, the union of Camillo and Paulina again reveals an important theme of the play; as with Florizel and Perdita, those who seem lost may yet, through the "turtledove" love celebrated in the Song of Songs, find wondrously romantic happiness.²³⁰

The marriage of Paulina and Camillo is one more clear example of how The Winter's Tale employs a convention of imaginative literature and marks itself as an example of Renaissance tragicomedy. Yet this play's radical mimesis of imagination and realism might cause us to question

our fundamental conceptions of reality, and then its last scene wondrously heightens this effect by presenting a striking image of what life might truly be. The “good truth” of “dear life” shown in this scene finally raises The Winter’s Tale’s characters to laughter, but the same cannot be said of all of its audiences. Think, for example, of Danby’s remark that the last plays “give us a schema for life rather than life itself,”²²¹ or F.H. Langman’s comment that:

Life is not like art, and does not afford us this miraculous imagined redemption. Life renews itself through new generations--Perdita, not Hermione. The dead stay dead. Not all our tears change that ... Beautiful and heart-thrilling as The Winter’s Tale unquestionably is, in the end we must say of it something like this--it truly reflects our human wish, but if we think of another final scene where a woman as loving and true as Hermione lies dead as earth, we shall not confuse that wish with truth.²²²

Usefully, Langman here clearly evaluates rather than interprets The Winter’s Tale, and so avoids the first error that causes this play to be devalued, the unwillingness to attend to its vital, polysemous meanings. This essay, too, has been able to present only a few of these meanings, yet the wide divergence between my evaluation and Langman’s is attributable not just to differences over what the text means, but moreover to foundational differences about the very nature of life itself, and the extent to which this text teaches us truth about that life. For Langman, King Lear is a truer, more valuable text than The Winter’s Tale, and perhaps we might thus concur with the neoclassical view that the latter cannot be “heart-thrilling” beyond the thrill of a brief moment of fantasy.

Within Christian horizons, however, The Winter’s Tale provides not only a vivid account of how human sin commonly leads to death, not simply a comic imaginative world of delightful intensity, not just an inspiring picture of how human virtue can help to restore human life, and not just the suggestive but still needing to be qualified insight that “the motto for The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest is not art for art’s sake (the climax of both plays is the repudiation of art) but art for life’s sake.”²²³ In addition to, but beyond, all these insights, this play also points, “mockingly” but unavoidably and in as “lively” a way as art can, toward the divine “Life” which truly lies behind all resurrection of human life, the Christian God. Langman might mock such a reading by saying that one who accepts it has been “mock’d with art” (5.3.67), and “should be hooted at” (5.3.116). In response one could calmly say, with Paulina, “but it appears [Hermione] lives” (5.3.117), and

suggest that this imaginative revelation provides a mimetic analogue for Mary Magdalene's "vision of angels" who "said that he was alive" (Luke 24:23). Finally, one might say to Langman and other atheist critics that these textual revelations are not simply imaginative, but rather part of the redemption begun in history by Jesus Christ. Accepting the "heavens directing," one may hope that, after the "wide gap of time" during which we are "dissever'd" from our loved ones (5.3.150-55), then "in the wink of an eye some new grace will be born" (5.2.110-111) and our short sleep of death will end with awakening to joyous new life. Naturally many critics cannot see this vision, but ultimately our evaluative differences cannot be settled by argument, appeals to aesthetic technique, or solely imaginative contexts. While the humanism of The Winter's Tale does allow a number of valid forms of human faith, finally it is its most glorious grace that to value it fully requires, in Lonerganian terms, a fundamental conversion of one's religious horizons; or, in Pauline and Paulina's terms, "it is required that [we] do awake [our] faith" in order to see the One who can convert us, the "Dear life" Who is figured within The Winter's Tale.

Ch. 5 Endnotes

- ¹ Dryden, "Defence" 172.
- ² Pope, Preface xx.
- ³ Coleridge, Lectures 380.
- ⁴ Lennox 85-86.
- ⁵ Johnson, Preface 61.
- ⁶ Quiller-Couch 235.
- ⁷ Bartholomeusz 29.
- ⁸ Hazlitt, Characters 325.
- ⁹ Bartholomeusz 65.
- ¹⁰ Bartholomeusz 95.
- ¹¹ Bartholomeusz 162.
- ¹² Bartholomeusz 62.
- ¹³ Bartholomeusz 21.
- ¹⁴ Bartholomeusz 183.
- ¹⁵ Masfield, qtd. Pafford, WT 180.
- ¹⁶ Knight, Crown 128.
- ¹⁷ Spurgeon 305-08.
- ¹⁸ Frye, "Recognition" 236.
- ¹⁹ Pafford, WT 1.
- ²⁰ Bartholomeusz 214.
- ²¹ Felperin, Romance 219.
- ²² Felperin, Romance 216.
- ²³ Felperin, Romance 212-13.
- ²⁴ Quiller-Couch 235.
- ²⁵ Bethell 47-67.
- ²⁶ Grantley 240; Cox, "Medieval" 245-46.
- ²⁷ Pettet 178.
- ²⁸ Frye, Natural 19.
- ²⁹ Frye, Natural 116.
- ³⁰ Riemer viii.
- ³¹ Riemer ix.
- ³² Riemer 1.
- ³³ Riemer viii.
- ³⁴ Dryden, "Defence" 172.
- ³⁵ Young 127.
- ³⁶ Pafford, WT li.
- ³⁷ F.R. Leavis, qtd. Pafford, WT li.
- ³⁸ Price 44; Frye, "Recognition" 235.
- ³⁹ Price 45.
- ⁴⁰ Dryden, "Dramatic" 57.
- ⁴¹ Frye, Natural 8.
- ⁴² Bartholomeusz 183.
- ⁴³ Colie 267.
- ⁴⁴ Young 121.
- ⁴⁵ Young 121.
- ⁴⁶ Frey, Vast 167.
- ⁴⁷ Frye, Natural 39.
- ⁴⁸ Pope, Essay 279.
- ⁴⁹ Knight, Crown 76.
- ⁵⁰ Pafford, WT 40.
- ⁶¹ Grantley 240.

- ⁵² Bethell 44.
- ⁵³ Bartholomeusz 20.
- ⁵⁴ Frey, Vast 116.
- ⁵⁵ Panofsky 82.
- ⁵⁶ Panofsky 82.
- ⁵⁷ Felperin, Romance 244.
- ⁵⁸ Barber 252.
- ⁵⁹ Overton 44.
- ⁶⁰ Overton 23.
- ⁶¹ Felperin, "Tongue-tied" 44.
- ⁶² Felperin, "Tongue-tied" 44.
- ⁶³ Bartholomeusz 18.
- ⁶⁴ Frye, Natural 116.
- ⁶⁵ Levin, "The Relation" 7, 11.
- ⁶⁶ Levin, "The Relation" 22.
- ⁶⁷ Levin, "The Relation" 22.
- ⁶⁸ Bryant 16.
- ⁶⁹ Pafford, WT xlii.
- ⁷⁰ Bryant 210.
- ⁷¹ Bryant 212.
- ⁷² Bryant 17.
- ⁷³ Levin, "The Relation" 8.
- ⁷⁴ qtd. Levin, "The Relation" 5.
- ⁷⁵ Levin, "The Relation" 6.
- ⁷⁶ Hoeniger, "The Meaning" 14.
- ⁷⁷ Frey, Vast 61-62.
- ⁷⁸ Fowler, qtd. Overton 27.
- ⁷⁹ Overton 27.
- ⁸⁰ Knight 96-97.
- ⁸¹ Cf. Bethell 76-89, 100-04.
- ⁸² Tillyard, Last Plays 84.
- ⁸³ James 210.
- ⁸⁴ Bethell 76.
- ⁸⁵ Pafford, WT xlii.
- ⁸⁶ Frye, "Recognition" 240.
- ⁸⁷ Overton 21.
- ⁸⁸ Cosgrove 181.
- ⁸⁹ Nelson, qtd. Laroque 248.
- ⁹⁰ Laroque 248.
- ⁹¹ Laroque 248.
- ⁹² Hassel 18-19.
- ⁹³ Bentley, Vol. 1 94.
- ⁹⁴ Hassel 143.
- ⁹⁵ Knight, Crown 96-97.
- ⁹⁶ Knight, Crown 113.
- ⁹⁷ Frye, "Recognition" 239.
- ⁹⁸ Milward, Religious 24-42; One questions, as well, why a poem such as Hopkins' "Pied beauty," which is without explicit reference to Christianity, is readily recognized as sacramental, but Perdita's praise of "art which in their piedness shares / With great creating Nature" is interpreted as pantheistic.
- ⁹⁹ Felperin, Romance 211-212.
- ¹⁰⁰ Coghill, "The Basis" 29.
- ¹⁰¹ Driver 37.

- ¹⁰² Danby 98.
- ¹⁰³ Danby 98.
- ¹⁰⁴ Overton 59.
- ¹⁰⁵ Bethell 81.
- ¹⁰⁶ Coleridge, Lectures 380-81.
- ¹⁰⁷ Knight, Crown 80-81.
- ¹⁰⁸ Overton 60.
- ¹⁰⁹ Knight, Crown 77.
- ¹¹⁰ Peterson 166.
- ¹¹¹ Peterson 166.
- ¹¹² Knight, Crown 79.
- ¹¹³ Knight, Crown 79.
- ¹¹⁴ Knight, Crown 79.
- ¹¹⁵ Johnson, Preface 61.
- ¹¹⁶ Gourlay 378.
- ¹¹⁷ Jameson 158-60.
- ¹¹⁸ Knight, Crown 92.
- ¹¹⁹ Grantley 241.
- ¹²⁰ Frey, Vast 61.
- ¹²¹ Felperin, Romance 215.
- ¹²² Pilgrim 62.
- ¹²³ Jones 157.
- ¹²⁴ Jones 158-59.
- ¹²⁵ Gourlay 382.
- ¹²⁶ Jameson 170.
- ¹²⁷ Grantley 242.
- ¹²⁸ Frey, Vast 61.
- ¹²⁹ Knight, Crown 95.
- ¹³⁰ Overton 84.
- ¹³¹ Riemer 141.
- ¹³² See Asp.
- ¹³³ Knight, Crown 88.
- ¹³⁴ Overton 85.
- ¹³⁵ Knight, Crown 92.
- ¹³⁶ Riemer 173.
- ¹³⁷ Riemer 173.
- ¹³⁸ Riemer 176.
- ¹³⁹ Young 125.
- ¹⁴⁰ Smith, WT 1580.
- ¹⁴¹ Battenhouse 233.
- ¹⁴² Rowland, qtd. Bartholomeusz 12.
- ¹⁴³ Bethell 89.
- ¹⁴⁴ Knight, Crown 98-99.
- ¹⁴⁵ Young 145.
- ¹⁴⁶ Panofsky 82.
- ¹⁴⁷ Panofsky 83.
- ¹⁴⁸ Young 134.
- ¹⁴⁹ Young 143.
- ¹⁵⁰ Panofsky 93.
- ¹⁵¹ Hill 95-99.
- ¹⁵² Muir, "Last" 36.
- ¹⁵³ Young 143.

- ¹⁵⁴ Young 143.
¹⁵⁵ Young 143.
¹⁵⁶ Knight, Crown 101.
¹⁵⁷ Overton 74.
¹⁵⁸ Felperin, Romance 217.
¹⁵⁹ Peterson 191.
¹⁶⁰ Dowden 377.
¹⁶¹ Knight, Crown 100.
¹⁶² Bartholomeusz 107.
¹⁶³ Bate 228.
¹⁶⁴ Bate 228.
¹⁶⁵ Bate 230.
¹⁶⁶ Bate 232.
¹⁶⁷ Knight, Crown 102.
¹⁶⁸ Bate 231.
¹⁶⁹ Bartholomeusz 15.
¹⁷⁰ Bate 232.
¹⁷¹ Young 126.
¹⁷² Young 126.
¹⁷³ Frey, Vast 143.
¹⁷⁴ Young 127.
¹⁷⁵ Battenhouse 232-33.
¹⁷⁶ Peterson 171.
¹⁷⁷ Jameson 127.
¹⁷⁸ Peterson 171.
¹⁷⁹ Smith 1566.
¹⁸⁰ Frey, Vast 146.
¹⁸¹ Young 137.
¹⁸² Felperin, Romance 225.
¹⁸³ Knight, Crown 119.
¹⁸⁴ Peterson 192.
¹⁸⁵ Frey, Vast 154.
¹⁸⁶ Peterson 205.
¹⁸⁷ Knight, Crown 113.
¹⁸⁸ James 214.
¹⁸⁹ Laroque 247.
¹⁹⁰ King James Version. This allusion is one of the few cases in which the language of Shakespeare's romances is closer to the King James version than to the Geneva version. It is possible that Shakespeare knew the King James version by the writing of The Winter's Tale, and he may even have had a hand in it. See Psalm 46; Noble, Bible 57.
¹⁹¹ Battenhouse 233; Knight, Crown 118.
¹⁹² Gesner 123.
¹⁹³ Bate 233.
¹⁹⁴ Bate 235-36.
¹⁹⁵ Marshall 124.
¹⁹⁶ Riemer 150-51.
¹⁹⁷ Yates 90-91.
¹⁹⁸ Riemer 154.
¹⁹⁹ This reading of Nicholas of Cusa is highly questionable. In On Learned Ignorance, Cusanus says, "Understanding is the unfolding of faith" (49). See Hill 13-21.
²⁰⁰ Riemer 154.
²⁰¹ Peterson 209.
²⁰² Levin, "The Relation" 21.

- ²⁰³ Levin, New Readings 199.
²⁰⁴ Frye, Natural 117.
²⁰⁵ Marshall 41.
²⁰⁶ Bryant 223.
²⁰⁷ Hellenga 18.
²⁰⁸ Marshall 41.
²⁰⁹ Marshall 42.
²¹⁰ Bethell 103.
²¹¹ Colic 238.
²¹² Bate 237.
²¹³ Felperin, Romance 241.
²¹⁴ Young 132.
²¹⁵ Young 132.
²¹⁶ Schmidt 732.
²¹⁷ Peterson 209.
²¹⁸ Felperin, Romance 241.
²¹⁹ Bate 239.
²²⁰ Bate 239.
²²¹ Goddard 64.
²²² Noble 248.
²²³ Bartholomeusz 70.
²²⁴ Granville-Barker, More 22.
²²⁵ Bartholomeusz 192.
²²⁶ Laroque 247.
²²⁷ Knight, Crown 128.
²²⁸ Faucit 48-49.
²²⁹ Frye, Natural 116-17.
²³⁰ Battenhouse 233-34.
²³¹ Danby 8.
²³² Langman 203-04.
²³³ Felperin, Romance 244.

**“To Keep Them Living”:
The “Project” of The Tempest**

Of the four romances, none has had its estimate of value reversed more in the late twentieth century than The Tempest. For, after being placed first in the first Folio by Heminges and Condell, “from Dryden to the end of the nineteenth century” one hears from critics “an uninterrupted chorus of rhapsodic praise.”¹¹ Unlike the other romances, The Tempest adheres to the unities of time, place, and action, and thus won the praise of neoclassical critics. Even so commonsensical a critic as Johnson praised the play’s fantasy for showing “profound skill in nature, extensive knowledge of opinions, and accurate observation of life.”¹² It was in the nineteenth century, however, that The Tempest was most exalted; indeed, “the very understanding of Imagination itself, in the new full Romantic sense, was pretty well defined by reference to Shakespeare--and particularly in relation to The Tempest.”¹³ Hazlitt called it “one of the most original and perfect of Shakespeare’s productions,” one which shows “all the variety of his powers,”¹⁴ while Coleridge praised The Tempest as a prime example of Shakespeare’s “astonishing and intuitive knowledge of what man must be at all times and under all circumstances.”¹⁵ This atemporal wisdom led Coleridge to follow the original suggestion of Thomas Campbell¹⁶ and see Prospero as “a portrait of the bard himself,”¹⁷ but not so much the historical dramatist as the spiritual visionary; for Coleridge, the Shakespeare we see in Prospero “is rather to be looked upon as a prophet than as a poet.”¹⁸

Romantic, autobiographical, and religious readings further flourished in the “efflorescence of allegorical criticism”¹⁹ that followed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In one allegory, Prospero embodied “the Imagination,” Ariel the “Fancy,” Caliban “the brute Understanding;”²⁰ in another, the play represented “the Mystery of Redemption” in a “very roughly Dantesque” manner in which Prospero represents God, Ariel the angel of the Lord, Caliban the devil, Miranda the celestial bride, “the ‘court party’ of purgatorial status, while Ferdinand attains to Paradise;”²¹ in yet another, The Tempest figured in its action and title that “storm” which was “the epochal event of the Reformation.”²² Esoteric or at least “improbable”²³ as most critics today are likely to find such readings, A.D. Nuttall notes that this allegorical criticism valuably differs from “the common run of criticism today in that it was metaphysical,”²⁴ concerned with what The

Tempest teaches us about ultimate reality. Dowden, for example, who believed this to be the last complete play, thought Shakespeare analogous to Prospero not simply because both renounced their art, but moreover because the magician mirrors the spiritual calm exhibited by the dramatist throughout the four romances:

the temper of Prospero, the grave harmony of his character, his 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 a characteristic of Shakespeare as discovered to us in all his latest plays.¹⁶

Despite noting that allegorical readings left “an heavy overplus unaccounted for in the poetry,”¹⁶ then, it was on the grounds of Prospero’s spiritual wisdom that Knight would see “nothing particularly surprising” in reading The Tempest as religious allegory, and would himself call Prospero a Nietzschean superman who embodied “the compulsion of man to super-humanity, drawing man in his own despite to god-in-man.”¹⁷ This analogy has proven the least influential of all Knight’s readings of the romances, for, as Spencer pointed out, Prospero “abjures his magic not to become like the gods, but to return to his humanity.”¹⁸ Against Coleridge, Dowden, and Knight, though still linking magician and dramatist, Dover Wilson argued that the “Prospero we see at the end of the play is a very humble person,” and that “the Shakespeare we last catch sight of is no prophet upon the heights, but a penitent on his knees.”¹⁹ Although Knight’s reading of Prospero’s character did not prosper, the impact of his general encomia of The Tempest has been “extraordinary.”²⁰ Knight finds in this play not only another example of the late romances’ pattern of sin, separation, and reconciliation through forgiveness, but also a distilling of “the poetic essence of the whole Shakespearean universe” in which tempest symbolizes tragedy, music celestial harmony;²¹ together, the importance of these elements means that The Tempest “is itself [a] metaphor”²² of Shakespeare’s spiritual wisdom.

Since the myth criticism of the 1920s and 1930s, more critics than can here be noted have contributed to a fuller understanding of The Tempest’s rich poetic vision; a synecdoche of this critical richness is Kermode’s 1954 Arden edition. Prospero’s spiritual struggles remain important, but Kermode considers these within the traditions of the neoplatonic Renaissance magus. As well, the meaning of Prospero’s “art” (1.1.24) is seen as part of the debate between

nature and art typical of serious pastoral poetry, a debate in which Caliban represents "natural man."²¹ The play is also a "tragicomedy" in which the political tragedy that precedes the play and is reenacted within it ultimately illustrates "the mercy of a providence which gives new life."²⁴ These generic considerations, though, are also linked to historical accounts of the 1609 Bermuda voyages now recognized as direct sources; this travel literature, Kermode argues,

must have seemed to contain the whole situation [of tragicomedy] in little. There a group of men were, as they themselves said, providentially cast away into a region of delicate and temperate fruitfulness, where Nature provided abundantly; brought out of the threatening but merciful sea into that New World where, said the voyagers, men lived in a state of nature. Ancient problems of poetry and philosophy were given an extraordinary actuality.²⁵

Other sources could also provide important interpretative contexts, such as the "unmistakable traces" of Florio's translation of Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," found in the glorification of natural man in Gonzalo's utopian speech (2.1.148). Here, though, since Caliban is an anagram of "cannibal" yet is not a virtuous savage, the source seems to undercut the utopian ideals espoused by Gonzalo, and to diminish the possibility of seeing The Tempest's island as an arcadian paradise, however much we wish to side with good Gonzalo against the sniping of Antonio and Sebastian.

In addition to these historical, philosophical, and theological considerations, Kermode also completed his highly varied introduction by discussing the aesthetic spectacle and structure of the masque in 4.1,²⁶ which can be considered within the Jacobean conventions that flourished under the influence of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. Finally, despite a "paucity of imagery," Kermode notes that the play's verse conveys the "complexity of certain concepts" such as the "remarkable changes" which "are rung on the word 'sea,'"²⁷ a feature which makes The Tempest a remarkably rich, if ever elusive and shifting, ground for formalist analysis. To borrow the words of Ariel's beautiful song about Ferdinand's supposedly dead father lying "full-fathom five," critics of this play's aesthetics felt that no aspect of it could "fade" but rather, to ears and eyes sympathetically attuned, would "suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange" (1.2.402-04).

The varied quality of Kermode's edition has not been sustained in much contemporary criticism, however, as a post-colonial interpretation of The Tempest has radically reversed many of

its fundamental tenets. Ironically, Kermode's Arden itself suggests this "new" reading by describing Caliban as "the core of the play,"²⁸ for the core of the post-colonial reading is an increased acceptance of this character's claims, and a revaluation of his relationship with Prospero. "This island's mine," Caliban bitterly exclaims to Prospero (1.2.331), and post-colonial critics thus see *The Tempest*, and particularly the portrayal of a benevolent colonizer in Prospero, as attempting a justification of colonialism "adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial phase."²⁹ Yet Shakespeare's discourse becomes "contradictory"³⁰ by also giving voice to the viewpoint of the marginalized "other," who in *The Tempest* is represented first by Ariel but, most poignantly, by Caliban. Seeing patterns typical of European Christian colonization, post-colonial critics argue that Prospero controls Caliban in three key areas: first, sexuality, as Caliban is enslaved because of his unrepentant attempt to rape Miranda, a portrayal which can be seen as "demonization" since this accusation against him is Prospero's "only justification for the arbitrary rule he exercises over the island and its inhabitants;"³¹ second, language, as the attempt to give Caliban a "civilized" tongue prompts within him the archetypal cry of the colonized: "You taught me language / And my profit on it is I know how to curse" (1.2.363-64); third, reality, as for both Ariel and Caliban, Prospero narrates and hence determines the "true" story of their origins on the island.³² Viewing Prospero's "project" (5.1.1) as primarily an attempt to claim political power, post-colonial critics argue that he either "invites" or requires the play's other characters

to recognize themselves as subjects of his discourse, as beneficiaries of his civil largess. Thus for Miranda he is a strong father who educates and protects her; for Ariel he is a rescuer and taskmaster; for Caliban he is a coloniser whose refused offer of civilization forces him to strict discipline; for the shipwrecked he is a surrogate providence who corrects errant aristocrats and punishes plebeian revolt. Each of these subject positions confirms Prospero as master.³³

Condemning other critics' "uncritical willingness to identify Prospero's voice as direct and reliable authorial statement,"³⁴ and describing the play as "systematically silent about Prospero's own act of usurpation,"³⁵ post-colonial critics argue that

Through its very occlusion of Caliban's version of proper beginnings, Prospero's disavowal is itself performative of the discourse of colonialism, since this particular

reticulation of denial of dispossession with retrospective justification for it, is the characteristic trope by which European colonial regimes articulated their authority over land to which they could have no conceivable legitimate claim.³⁶

As critics familiar with the Foucauldian New Historicist conception of “discourse” would guess, post-colonial interpretations derive not just from intratextual elements but also from the reinterpretation and revaluation of extra-textual elements, especially the accounts of the 1609 Bermuda voyages. Arguing that Kermode’s use of these sources, “which might *seem* to militate against autotelic unity by relating the text in question to other texts, in fact only obscures such relationships”³⁷ by presenting Prospero’s relationship with Caliban “without the historical contextualization that would locate it among the early universalizing forms of incipient bourgeois hegemony.”³⁸ The effect is to maintain a “picture of a self-disciplined, reconciliatory white magician”³⁹ without seeing that the discourse between master and slave should not be read as having “some portable and ‘universal’ content but, rather, as instrumental in the organization and legitimization of power-relations.”⁴⁰ Through these Foucauldian arguments, then, post-colonial critics emphatically reject the claims of critics such as Frye, who argue that despite the play’s sources and topical allusions, it “really has nothing to do with the New World.”⁴¹

For post-colonial critics, then, The Tempest’s “dominant discursive con-texts” are the “fictional and lived practices” of “English Colonialism.”⁴² Intratextual moments such as Prospero’s “distemper’d” (4.1.145) interruption of the masque to deal with Caliban and his co-conspirators, which Kermode had explained away as “an oddly pedantic concern for classical structure,”⁴³ instead become evidence of how “the shakiness of Prospero’s position is indeed staged.”⁴⁴ As for the play’s conclusion, in which Caliban seems to repent and “seek for grace” (5.1.296), post-colonial critics argue that this represents “the quelling of a fundamental disquiet concerning its own functions within the projects of colonialist discourse.”⁴⁵ The ending thus “declares no all-embracing triumph for colonialism”; instead, the final “renunciation and restoration is only the final ambivalence” of The Tempest, “being at once the apotheosis, mystification and potential erosion of the colonialist discourse.”⁴⁶

How influential has the post-colonial reading of The Tempest been? A signal essay by the prominent New Historian Stephen Greenblatt, “Learning to Curse,” focuses on The Tempest.

Greenblatt outlines how the play portrays linguistic imperialism, "the startling encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture," and admits that Caliban is an evil, devilish creature, but he also celebrates him because of his lyrical "This isle's full of noises" speech (3..135-43); further, in his defiance of Prospero, "Caliban wins a momentary victory that is, quite simply, an assertion of inconsolable human pain and bitterness."⁴⁷ A similar celebration of Caliban has also been given in a feminist reading of the play, Lorie Leininger's "The Miranda Trap," which has been widely circulated in Signet Classic paperback editions. Developing the possibility that the Tempest was performed as part of the wedding festivities for James' daughter Elizabeth, who in 1613 married Frederick the Elector Palatine, Leininger begins by devaluing The Tempest because its miracles were not repeated for the historical audience who might have identified with it; unlike Miranda's profitable dependence on Prospero, "the repeated political and military failures of Elizabeth and Frederick were exacerbated by their dependence upon the shifting promises of King James."⁴⁸ Prospero is seen as a sexist father who places his daughter "in a threatening situation which in turn calls for more protection, and thus increased dependence and increased subservience";⁴⁹ he protects Miranda's chastity because he needs her "as sexual bait" to resolve the royal dispute between Milan and Naples. Prospero similarly enslaves and oppresses Caliban, though this too is obscured, Leininger argues, "under the guise of religion, humanism, and Neoplatonic idealism, by identifying Prospero with God (or spirit, or soul, or imagination), and Caliban with the Devil (or matter, body, and lust)."⁵⁰ Leininger concludes by advocating that we "invent a modern Miranda," and "permit her to speak a new Epilogue" which demythologizes The Tempest's ideology; let us see, Leininger's Miranda would say, that Prospero

is no God-figure. No one is a God-figure.... There is no such thing as a 'natural slave'.... I will not be used as the excuse for his enslavement.... Will I succeed in creating my 'brave new world' which has people in it who no longer exploit one another? I cannot be certain. I will at least make my start by springing 'the Miranda-trap,' being forced into unwitting collusion with domination by appearing to be a beneficiary. I need to join forces with Caliban--to join forces with all those who are exploited or oppressed--to stand beside Caliban and say,

'As we from crimes would pardon'd be,

Let's work to set each other free.'⁵¹

Leininger's reading of Prospero is the most radical revaluation offered thus far; yet similar mistrust of this once beloved character also permeates Stephen Orgel's Oxford edition, which by its own impressive variety and scholarship appears the edition most likely to replace Kermode's Arden as the standard critical text. After justly establishing that Prospero is "a complex, erratic, and even contradictory figure, though criticism has not invariably seen him as such,"⁵² Orgel problematizes Prospero in a controversial way. After observing that at play's end Antonio does not repent, inexplicably Orgel adds that "he is, indeed, not *allowed* to repent,"⁵³ and then implies that the cause of Antonio's earlier attempt at regicide is Prospero: "The crime that Prospero holds in reserve for later use against his brother is the attempted assassination of Alonso."⁵⁴ After quoting the passage in which Ariel speaks of Prospero's "project" before awakening Gonzalo to prevent regicide, Orgel again seems to blame Prospero for the murderous intentions of Antonio and Sebastian:

This situation has been created by Prospero, and the murderous conspiracy is certainly part of his project--that is why Sebastian and Antonio are not put to sleep. If Antonio is not compelled by Prospero to propose the murder, he is certainly acting as Prospero expects him to do, and as Ariel says Prospero 'through his art foresees' that he will.

Prospero is restaging his usurpation, and maintaining his control over it this time.⁵⁵

Though Orgel's meaning here is not clear enough to be theologically precise, he again seems to turn Prospero into a God-figure who manipulates not only providence, but also the other humans on the island; yet, for Orgel, Prospero as God is a tyrant.

In summary, then, as Howard Felperin notes in a 1990 article called "The Tempest in Our Time," between Knight and the critics of the early seventies, none "had much to say about social realism,"⁵⁶ but "barely fourteen years" since Bruce Erlich's Marxist interpretation in the mid-nineteen seventies,

The positions have practically reversed themselves. What Shakespearean now would be oblivious or audacious enough to discuss The Tempest as anything *other* than 'a work of profound social realism'--which is to say, discuss it from any critical standpoint other than a historicist or feminist or, more specifically, a post-colonial position? Would anyone be so foolhardy as to concentrate on the so-called 'aesthetic dimension' of the play?⁵⁷

If popular opinion is no sure guide, however, to a knowledge of either truth, goodness, or beauty, it may be foolish not to examine more closely the post-colonial reading of The Tempest. Is its interpretation more valid, its evaluation more valuable, than earlier readings? How might a Lonerganian resolve the current critical impasse over what constitutes true knowledge of the meaning and value of The Tempest?

An initial dialectical response to these questions, and those just asked by Felperin, is simply to consider again those aspects which the political emphasis of post-colonial readings omits, but which other audiences have widely praised as aesthetically beautiful. The Tempest is “one of the most beautiful literary objects ever made,”⁵⁸ and Coleridge justly praises “the picturesque power” in even “a single word” of its poetry.⁵⁹ A Lonerganian would also argue that there is no extra or intratextual basis for Orgel denying Antonio and Sebastian free will, since Prospero is not God, and providence need not be understood according to the doctrine of predestination. Further, one might critique Leininger’s reading, especially her new epilogue, as a “rewriting” of The Tempest which substitutes her own values for those meanings that are actually mediated by the text. As well, there would yet remain the need to debate her evaluation of values that are in the text, such as The Tempest’s emphasis on chastity. Perhaps most important for valid interpretation, however, is that neglected aspects of The Tempest’s text have also been shown to cast doubt upon how much colonial discourse is actually present. Caliban’s god Setebos may be a New World deity mentioned in colonial narratives, for example, yet he “himself is not a native inhabitant of the island” but rather “the child of the Algerian Sycorax who was herself an earlier exile to the island.”⁶⁰ Further, “Prospero is not establishing an empire, he is exiled to a place that is thought to be barren;”⁶¹ finally, “the location of the island is not the New World, but what was for the Elizabethans the centre of the old world, the Mediterranean,” for “the shipwreck occurs *en route* from Tunis to Naples.”⁶² Post-colonial criticism, one could argue, “flattens the text into the mold of colonialist discourse and eliminates what is characteristically ‘Shakespearean’ in order to foreground what is ‘colonialist.’”⁶³ Further, to move from intra to extratextual matters, it can also be argued that the post-colonial interpretations of the 1609 travel accounts flatten them by foregrounding what appeals to the New Historicist, and ignoring or belittling these accounts’ emphasis on Divine providence, which is so characteristic of voyage literature both during the Renaissance and throughout Shakespeare’s romances. For writers like Sylvester Jourdain, the

Bermuda shipwreck was the work of God: "it pleased God out of His most gracious and merciful providence so to direct and guide our ship (being left to the mercy of the sea) for her most advantage."⁶⁴ "The prime part of the Governor's role" in these voyages, writes modern critic David Daniells, is "to let himself be used by God to deliver the English company from two tempests, one elemental and one social."⁶⁵ Since Prospero also frequently credits providence for his power, does not the post-colonial rejection of the concept of providence run the "danger of taking the play further from the particular historical background in England in 1611?"⁶⁶

Given these interpretative problems, it is unsurprising that doubts have also been raised about the value of the post-colonial evaluation of The Tempest. Anthony Dawson, sympathetically assuming for the moment (as a Lonerganian only partially accepts) that "the grounds for evaluation are historical and ideological," wonders "why do Caliban-critics value the play as much as Prospero-critics?". Dawson then cynically asks, "is this decentering of the text merely a means to decenter academic power, towards themselves?". Parodying New Historicist jargon, Dawson concludes by suggesting that perhaps the recent "critical tailoring that has dressed up The Tempest may be its most elaborate con-text."⁶⁷ Post-colonial criticism does, however, have its own variety of reasons for highly valuing this play, and in fact "no critical movement, not even the bardolatry of the nineteenth or the myth-criticism of the twentieth century, has done more to sustain the canonicity of the play."⁶⁸ Most of these reasons are political, and focus on The Tempest's capacity to help us understand the nature of colonialism and change its effects. As Barker and Hulme put it, the "intertextuality" granted by discourse analysis

identifies in all texts a potential for new linkages to be made and thus for new political meanings to be constructed. Rather than attempting to derive the text's significance from the moment of its production, this politicized intertextuality emphasizes the present *use* to which texts can now be put.⁶⁹

The great question for the validity of the post-colonial evaluation, however, a question that the interpretative caveats just offered makes unavoidable, is whether post-colonial critics have imposed their values upon The Tempest while ignoring the meanings which the play actually mediates. In defence of the post-colonial interpretation, however, it is undeniable that there are references in the play to the New World, the "Bermoothes" (1.2.229) being the islands upon which the Virginia company had been shipwrecked in 1609. Moreover, if the play does not

portray colonialism, “why, then, does Shakespeare’s savage appeal so widely and profoundly to such a variety of non-English ethnic groups and nationalities?”⁷⁰ Caribbean writer Roberto Retamar, for example, argues that the post-colonial reading

is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of these same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language--today he has no other--to curse him, to wish that the ‘red plague’ would fall on him? I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality.... What is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?⁷¹

If one rejects Retamar’s vision as culturally biased, one must also consider the numerous instances of writers from a pro-colonialist position using The Tempest to justify their views, writers who suggest that a colonial reading of The Tempest is not so new after all. James Surtees Phillpotts, for example, the editor of the 1876 Rugby edition of the play, wrote:

The character [of Caliban] may have had a special bearing on the great question of a time when we were discovering fresh colonies.... Even if there were special dangers to savage races when first brought into contact with civilization, yet we might justify the usurpation of power by those who were mentally and morally the stronger, as long as that usurpation was only used to educate and humanize the savage.⁷²

Lest Philpott’s view be written off as nineteenth-century British snobbery, one should note that even twentieth-century critics such as Knight celebrated The Tempest as “a myth of the national soul” which future historians would see as an example of how Britain had contributed to the growth of civilization through “her will to raise savage peoples from superstition and blood-sacrifice, taboos and witchcraft and the attendant fears and slaveries, to a more enlightened existence.”⁷³ Geoffrey Bullough, too, though initially saying that “The Tempest is not a play about colonization,” continues to argue that colonial issues must have been on Shakespeare’s mind while writing the play, and though “he was not writing a didactic work ... nevertheless approval of the Virginia Company’s aims, and recognition of its difficulties, seem to be implied in his depiction of Prospero, Caliban, and the intruders into the island.”⁷⁴ Perhaps Thomas Cartelli is right to argue that

The text of The Tempest continues to allow Prospero the privilege of the grand closing gesture; continues to privilege that gesture's ambiguity at the expense of Caliban's dispossession; continues, in short, to support and substantiate the very reading of itself transacted by the ideologies in question ... The Tempest is not only complicit in the history of its successive misreadings, but responsible in some measure for the development of the ways in which it is read.⁷⁵

Even accepting, then, the accuracy of the interpretative points made against the post-colonial reading, perhaps the latter's insights are also textually justified and must be integrated into a broader scholarly understanding of the meaning and value of The Tempest. But how can the same text produce such divergent readings?

One interesting answer to this question is provided by Felperin, who argues that no less than the Christian allegories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, "the post-colonial Tempest produced in our time is still very much an allegorical romance."⁷⁶ "Only the particular allegories have changed,"⁷⁷ Felperin claims, before arguing that both the traditional and the post-colonial methods of allegory are textually based; both forms of allegory, within the text, are doubly disciplined: on the one side by the discursive structure of the text, its system of relations and oppositions ('art-nature,' 'white versus blackness,' 'old world-new world,' etc.); and on the other, by the discursive forestructure of understanding already in place in its various contexts of reception and reinscription (civilization-cannibalism, Christianity-paganism, whiteness-negritude, imperialism-nationalism, etc). For an allegory can come into being only if a mesh, a fitment can be found between the two; if not, the 'other' that allegory is supposed to express could never be read out of it. The 'farewell to the stage' allegory had to focus on, and thereby foreground and privilege, different discursive features of the text from the 'welcome-to-colonialism' allegory. The former fixed on Prospero as *magician*, on the power of *art*, on his collaboration with his *spirits*, and of course on his repudiation of magic and departure from the island; the latter on Prospero as *usurper*, on the art of *power*, on events *prior* to the play, particularly the attempted rape of Miranda and its unfortunate aftermath.⁷⁸

Leininger's reading, Felperin might argue, can also be seen as an allegory in which Prospero is James I, Miranda his daughter Elizabeth, and Ferdinand Duke Frederick. There is no "evidence

that [The Tempest] was written as an allegory of the betrothal of the king's daughter,"⁷⁹ but that historical event did occur, and we can see parallels for it in The Tempest, just as one can see how the historical texts of the Bermuda voyages prompted the play's Christian allegories; in these writings,

the pieties of the prose account are more than conventional; they owe their awed intensity to the sequences of catastrophe and miracle that the voyages endured. We need not hesitate to treat the play as an allegory since that is how Shakespeare's contemporaries treated the actual event.⁸⁰

Reading The Tempest as allegory, in short, cannot be refuted by Richard Levin's claim that the tradition of criticism cannot support this approach, since for Tempest criticism the opposite is true, a well-known fact conveniently omitted from New Readings vs. Old Plays. Levin does admit that some plays "call for" thematic or allegorical commentary, but thinks this the case only if they "are about a central theme,"⁸¹ such as medieval morality plays. Levin's mistake, though, is the common one of expecting that in allegory, everything has a "one-to-one relation to something outside of it."⁸² In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, however, "most books, even those whose characters are preeminently human, could be read allegorically because the book of nature could be also."⁸³ For example, "Hamlet images his own and every man's situation in the form of a sparrow," and "it is easy to imagine an early audience of The Tempest seeing in it everything from an entertaining spectacle to a parable (a word used interchangeably with allegory) of the life of man."⁸⁴ However esoteric we might find the nineteenth-century allegorists, Nuttall similarly argues, "their heresy is less than that of the hard-headed, poetry-has-nothing-to-do-with-ideas school" represented by Levin.⁸⁵

Attempting to judge which ideas are explored in this play, A.D. Nuttall's Two Concepts of Allegory (a study of The Tempest) shows how medieval and Renaissance writers distinguished allegory from typology, or "figura"⁸⁶ (as Dante called typology). Nuttall argues that Coghill "may be right" to argue that Shakespeare shares with Dante "a metaphysical view of virtues and vices as active (a view authorized by much Christian religious language)."⁸⁷ Yet, Nuttall then cautions that this play is "obviously not an explicit allegory in which both the figure and its significance are clearly expressed in the text, in the manner of the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius,"⁸⁸ and that the

metaphysical quality of allegory in the play “is less easily performed for The Tempest than it is for The Winter’s Tale.⁷⁹” In his conclusion, Nuttall initially says, “If the suggestion of the unique authority of love and value were only a little more explicit, we might allow the word ‘allegorical’ for the play as a whole, and consider the restoration of the supposedly dead as a myth of this ethic”; “instead,” what “we have is an extraordinarily delicate and dramatic play which, until the Last Day makes all things clear, will never be anything but immensely suggestive.”⁸⁰

Perhaps the play’s mimesis should be termed “pre-allegorical.”⁸¹ Nuttall suggests, thus joining a multitude of critics who argue that “it is the very self-consistency” of this play’s world that makes it “at once so impenetrable to criticism and so susceptible to allegorization.”⁸² Hazlitt, noting The Tempest’s mingling of human and imaginary characters, writes that “the preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth,” while “the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream.”⁸³ This imaginative suggestiveness is likely the reason why The Tempest has “stimulated such remarkable further works of art,”⁸⁴ like Milton’s Comus or Auden’s The Sea and the Mirror; yet, this is also the reason why so many critics have thought any interpretation of the play to be inevitably relative. Mark Van Doren, for example, observes that for this play, “any interpretation, even the wildest, is more or less plausible,”⁸⁵ while director Peter Brook finds none of Shakespeare’s plays “so baffling and elusive as The Tempest.⁸⁶” Orgel, after asserting the Nietzschean doctrine that “all interpretations are essentially arbitrary,” then argues that “Shakespeare’s texts are by nature open, offering the director or critic only a range of possibilities.”⁸⁷ The job of the critic is thus “to indicate the range of the play’s possibilities,” and though this “is also to acknowledge that many of them (as is the nature of possibilities) are mutually contradictory,” this “is nothing anomalous” but rather is typical of “poetry and drama of the highest order.”⁸⁸

Even if complexity and ambiguity are accepted as artistic virtues, however, is it true that contradictory interpretations or evaluations really are equally valuable? Leininger is quite right, in my view, to argue that “it makes an enormous difference in the expectations raised, whether one speaks of the moral obligations of Prospero-the-slave-owner toward Caliban-his-slave, or speaks of the moral obligations of Prospero-the-God-figure toward Caliban-the-lustful-Vice-figure.”⁸⁹

Leininger’s description of the second allegory here does not apply to many allegorical critics, but to

demonstrate this suggestion at least some aspects of the play must be clearly affirmed (as Spencer did when arguing that Prospero cannot be a God figure or a Superman because he drowns his book). Orgel, however, is so suspicious of Prospero that he doubts that he will keep this promise, saying that “we will look in vain for Prospero breaking his staff and drowning his book,”¹⁰⁰ even though Prospero makes this promise to “solemn music” at 5.1.55-57, and claims to have done so in the epilogue. In the following passage, Orgel’s preference for the ambiguity of the play leads not to multiple interpretations, but rather to a mistrust of the fundamental acts of reconciliation in the last act of the play:

The concern with repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and regeneration is one that is voiced often throughout The Tempest. But a much less clear pattern is the one that is acted out: repentance remains, at the play’s end, a largely unachieved goal, forgiveness is ambiguous at best, the clear ideal of reconciliation grows cold as the play concludes. And in this respect, the play is entirely characteristic of its author and genre: Shakespearean comedy rarely concludes with that neat and satisfactory resolution we are led to expect, and that criticism so often claims for it.¹⁰¹

There are some valid examples of Orgel’s point here, but also many counter examples; when he supports his point by arguing that Claudio “says not a word of apology, gratitude, or love”¹⁰² to Hero, he is neglecting to mention the entire scene of repentance in the preceding scene (Ado 5.3). For The Tempest, Orgel similarly ignores not only the forgiveness that Prospero voices to the other characters, but also the renunciation of power which promises this forgiveness to be real. Orgel concludes with a typical call to relativism, arguing that “whether we choose to describe” the endings of Shakespeare’s comedies “as open-ended, ironic, cynical or realistic, will depend more on our critical predilections than on anything in the texts;”¹⁰³ yet, is this not a self-fulfilling prophecy which is sustainable only because Orgel’s own ideology--postmodern relativism--disregards crucial words and actions in the text?

Orgel’s indefensible skepticism aside, there remains the broader question of whether allegory can be interpreted without the interpreter’s heuristic being primarily motivated by an external belief or value system. For, the most developed and widely practiced system of allegorical interpretation, the four-fold method of medieval Christian biblical exegesis, is clearly determined by external metaphysical beliefs. Often, this method interpreted the work of artists who clearly

shared these same metaphysical beliefs, however, and writers such as Dante or Langland include intratextual signs to make clear that their allegories should be interpreted within the tenets of the Christian faith. Although fundamental aspects of this faith are also part of The Tempest, and though many issues of value within the play can only be decided by an interpreter's extratextual moral and religious horizons, this play's intratextual signs are not so clear that any one metaphysical system can uniformly be taken as the sole method of interpretation. This is not to say that The Tempest does not teach ethical or metaphysical truth, or that all belief systems are equally represented in the play, only that the range of truths revealed in the mysterious world of this play cannot be censored or determined *a priori* by the interpreter's own beliefs.

Is there a means to interpret The Tempest which will neither rob the play of its rich mediation of meaning nor simply impose one's own values on the play? Can such an interpretation provide the basis for a more valuable evaluation of the play than currently exists? As the preceding dialectical discussion of Tempest criticism surely suggests, no easy answer to these questions exists, but perhaps a few general conclusions can be drawn as a foundation upon which to proceed.

As a text which so many different kinds of critics have read allegorically, The Tempest should be interpreted with the expectation (even more so than with any literary text), that polysemous meanings are likely to be found. Part of a critic's job, as Orgel says, is to indicate the range of interpretative possibility, and so an interpretation which can be supported by the text cannot simply be discarded, whether for aesthetic or ideological reasons, particularly if numerous critics have substantiated that element. For example, critics uncomfortable with the post-colonial reading cannot ignore the way Caliban's impassioned claims to the island have cast him as an archetypal colonial. Similarly, materialist critics cannot ignore or secularize the meaning of the numerous Christian religious elements in both the travel literature sources of the play and The Tempest. The text, then, provides a limit upon how snugly an interpretation can make the play fit into its ideological mold.

Achieving this first aim, though, cannot mean blithely accepting clearly contradictory interpretations which make it impossible to accept another valid reading; new allegorical interpretations, in other words, must supplement other readings, not make them impossible. There are aspects of some readings which must be rejected as speculative rewritings that cannot be taken

as part of the meaning of The Tempest. For example, the allegorizations of Caliban which make him an aspect of Prospero's soul cannot be maintained while taking seriously his colonial claims. Nor, indeed, can Prospero be simply an angry, controlling, oppressive colonizer if we are also to take seriously his role as neoplatonic Magus who is faced not so much with the problems of starting an empire but rather with Old World political treachery, and a moral struggle with strong Christian overtones. To allow Prospero these struggles one need not cast him as the boring, benevolent, all-forgiving wise man whose undeniable moments of anger are inexplicable. Yet to always show him as angry can be just as dreary and untrue to the text, as performances which overemphasize Caliban's claims often show. If this means that The Tempest must be understood as "prophetic rather than descriptive" of colonialism,¹⁰⁴ then that is a sacrifice of meaning and value which must be made if the other meanings and values of the play are also to be mediated.

Indeed, performance can often be a primary way to test the range of interpretations possible, for though The Tempest is a highly symbolic, philosophical play which normally "eludes a fully acceptable realization,"¹⁰⁵ still the insights of actors have often shown the inadequacy of various interpretations. Arnold Moss, who played Prospero on Broadway in 1945, found that the interpretations of the scholars had all seemed very limited to him, because "like the seven blind men of India, Prospero was for each of them a different part of the elephant, while none had seen him whole."¹⁰⁶ In playing Prospero, Moss found

a man who hates to the depth of his soul; who commands with a will of tempered steel; who loves his daughter, Miranda, with heartwarming tenderness; who appreciates the wry humor of young love; who can forge a moment of shining selflessness in the crucible of pain, error and experience; who, with exquisite humanity, can forgive those who have hurt him; and who at will can either govern the island of his imagination or renounce it to assume his true responsibilities in a world of men. In short, I found the best and worst of human traits in Prospero."¹⁰⁷

Performance is also important because, perhaps more than in any other work by Shakespeare, this play's frequent use of music and spectacle means that "The Tempest is charged with meaning of an essentially nonverbal kind."¹⁰⁸ Interpretations which cannot be reconciled to the tone of these performance elements, then, cannot be part of a valid interpretation or a valuable evaluation of this play.

Also, though, these same nonverbal elements often contain an allegorical, emblematic quality, an unsurprising feature given the popularity not only of the Jacobean masque, but also the fact that much of “the visual art of Elizabethan England was a strange mingling of the schematic and the symbolic with the realistic.”¹⁰⁹ As already noted, these elements can produce ambiguity of interpretation, but no Renaissance system of allegory ever rested in the ambiguous relativism preferred by postmoderns such as Orgel. Rather, elements such as the sea, voyages, and music, must be understood in the symbolic way suggested by the other romances, however less assertive The Tempest is about their meaning when compared to Pericles or The Winter’s Tale. To fail to understand them in this way is to erase the education in symbolic perception which Shakespeare’s romances have already provided his audience. Further, an alternative approach to the play’s symbolic elements is suggested within the play itself, in which there is a frequent emphasis on how the island “presents itself differently to different eyes,”¹¹⁰ as the exchange between Gonzalo, Antonio, and Sebastian in 2.1 exemplifies. This emphasis can lead to relativism, the feeling that “the lover has one level, the hater another,” so that “perhaps there are a thousand more such levels, each as unreal as the rest”;¹¹¹ but, The Tempest’s conclusion does not lead us to believe that all of these perceptions are equally valuable. However haltingly, Nuttall finally concludes by affirming that “the suggestiveness of The Tempest is metaphysical in tendency,” and that there are Christian “concepts adumbrated” in the manner suggested by Coghill:

Love is conceived as a supernatural force, and any number of protestations of metaphor and apologetic inverted commas cannot do away with the fact that a sort of deification, and therefore *a fortiori* reification has taken place. Whether these concepts should be allowed to be meaningful, or whether they should be permitted only a ‘merely aesthetic’ force (and that presumably spurious) I do not know. The unassertive candour of Shakespeare’s imagination has left the question open.¹¹²

The unassertiveness may be part of Shakespeare’s ethical intent, however, which asks readers themselves to test the value of their own perceptions and value judgments; the play, in short, may function as “an allegory of the process of interpretation”¹¹³ which—like Jesus’ parables—should not only be read, but also be seen as a means by which to read ourselves. Such a method would again be typical of medieval or Renaissance allegorists, for whom “literature, like life, would repay in kind the fineness and power of perception brought to bear on it.”¹¹⁴ Given

medieval or Renaissance poetics, it is not hard to imagine Shakespeare,

as much as the author of The Faerie Queene, deliberately casting his play as a 'dark conceit'-- the very difficulty of which forces its audience to work hard to understand it and puts them into a position analogous to that of the characters themselves, who also have to work hard for understanding. Those in the audience willing and able to labor in their minds, like Gonzalo and Alonso within the play, might win through to an understanding of its events, while others unwilling or unable, like Antonio and those archetypal groundlings, Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, might deny or miss its meaning. The Tempest, more than any other play of Shakespeare's, asks to be seen as glittering illusion or as essential reality, and its cast divides the possibilities of response among them.¹¹⁵

In this process, other persons' perceptions can also be evaluated, especially those sensitive artistic readings, such as Auden's, which have grasped how the play challenges readers; sometimes, however, differing value judgments cannot be resolved by appeal to the text. Still, the text limits which values can be debated; the value of Miranda's chastity is an open question in the text, as is the meaning of Antonio's final silence, but the fact of the chastity or the silence cannot be debated. To refute critics who deny such facts, one could borrow Prospero's words when the nobles cannot believe it is really he before them at play's end: "You do yet taste / Some subtleties o' th' isle, that will not let you / Believe things certain" (5.1.123-25).

Finally, within the play itself, just as there are undeniable facts, so there are a few strong intimations of the purpose and ultimate value of the play. The play, in short, has a "project," which is announced by Ariel in an extraordinarily apt epigraph. Orgel, as noted earlier, obscures the meaning here by blaming Prospero for the usurper's plot, but Ariel states that he must awake Gonzalo and save him from the murderers, "(For else his project dies) to keep them living" (2.1.299). Parenthetical, obscure though this line might be, it expresses the true benevolence of Prospero towards almost all of the play's characters, especially the murderers whom he hopes to save from themselves. Although Prospero's own statement of his project in the epilogue, "to please," sounds close to the purposes of a Renaissance dramatist who has studied the poetics of Horace or Sidney, ultimately this play's goal is also to keep its audience living. Without idealizing or deifying Prospero, or ignoring his struggles, we can say that, primarily, the action of the play is

Prospero's project, and its meaning and value must finally be understood within the purposes Prospero intends.

Indeed, the opening action of the play, so often synecdochal, is literally set in motion by Prospero's project, as we learn in 1.2 that it was he who raised the tempest and shipwrecked the Italian nobles. Why he has done so is the primary topic of that scene, but already clues within 1.1 itself, and parallels with Renaissance art, suggest Prospero's purposes. The most important parallels are with Shakespeare's earlier romances, in which shipwrecks also seem to bring certain death. The confrontation with mortality turns one's mind to religious matters by collapsing political and class distinctions among the Italian nobles and the crew that is returning them to Naples. Gonzalo is a councillor, but his word has little power against the storm, as the Boatswain mockingly suggests by saying, "Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have liv'd so long ..." (1.1.23-24). As in King Lear, so in The Tempest this devaluing of human authority precedes a return to elemental nature and a wind-tossed alternation between existential despair and prayerful pleas: "All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!" (1.1.50). The divine authority of kings, too, might also be questioned when loyal Gonzalo also reports the "King and Prince at prayers" and advises, "let's assist them, for our case is as theirs" (1.1.53-54). Not all the nobles on board heed this call; Antonio and Sebastian are alienated from their companions and, as the latter admits, are "out of patience" (1.1.55), the quality so vital in Shakespeare's romances. Sebastian curses the Boatswain as a "bawling, blasphemous, uncharitable dog!" (1.1.40-41), to which the class-conscious sailor gamely responds, "Work you then" (1.1.42). Antonio, meanwhile, entirely misses the point of Gonzalo's call by saying, "Let's all sink wi' th' King" (1.1.63). Although each of these characters will be swept up by events that will deeply affect his future, the opening scene's stark confrontation with death reveals human natures that remain fairly constant throughout the play. As at play's end, the opening scene concludes with a plea for "Mercy" (1.1.61) and a faint paraphrase of part of the Lord's prayer, but also a humble human note; Gonzalo trusts in providence but also shows his own natural human fears by exclaiming, "The wills above be done! but I would fain die a dry death" (1.1.67-68).

The spectre of death induced by this spectacular opening scene will haunt most of these characters, and especially King Alonso and Prince Ferdinand who, for most of the play, believe their compatriots dead. As for the audience of Pericles and Cymbeline, The Tempest's audience--

along with Miranda-- are immediately reassured by Prospero that there is "not so much perdition as an hair" (1.2.30). Lines like these liken Prospero's capacity to keep others living to God's concern for even "two sparrows" or "the hairs of [one's] head." (Matt.10: 29-31). Yet Prospero's authority derives not from himself but from the "art" he has learned as *magus* or magician; as Caliban somewhat hyperbolically states later, "possess his books; for without them / He's but a sot, as I am" (3.2.92-93). Numerous scholars have argued that this magic is "spiritual," and have placed Prospero in the tradition of Renaissance neoplatonic white magic that was based on the ideas of Marsilio Ficino, probably transmitted to England through Cornelius Agrippa's immensely popular survey De Occulta Philosophia.¹¹⁶ Works written in England, such as Bacon's Magnalia Naturae and Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, presented white magic as a combination of "Baconian science and neoplatonic philosophy" in which "the empirical study of nature" led "to the understanding and control of all its forces."¹¹⁷ Neoplatonic magic even became influential at court through John Dee, the influential Elizabethan magus whom Frances Yates compares to Prospero.¹¹⁸ Kermode argues that Prospero's "Art" is "the disciplined exercise of virtuous knowledge"¹¹⁹ in which, to quote Agrippa, one finds "an intellect pure and conjoined with the powers of the gods, without which we shall never happily ascend to the scrutiny of secret things, and to the power of wonderful workings."¹²⁰ In The Tempest, Prospero understands his safe trip to the island as "a sign of 'providence divine' (1.2.159) operating through a sympathetic nature."¹²¹ His use of Ariel's song and instruments can be traced to Ficino, for whom "music is a particularly powerful method of magical operation" because it "can imitate and transmit affective and moral content."¹²² Ethical altruism is a strong element in this tradition, for Renaissance "practitioners of benevolent magic" sought to sharply distinguish their work from "the self-absorbed egotism of necromancers,"¹²³ of whom Faustus is the most notorious representation. Reading within these contexts, many critics have argued that "throughout the play Prospero's aims are therapeutic and benevolent," and--strongly rejecting claims that he is "demonic, vengeful, or senilely irascible"¹²⁴--see him as "a person of great dignity, authority, and dedication."¹²⁵

In 1.2, despite the undoubted importance of his role as neoplatonic magus, Prospero "lays down his mantle," while Miranda "plucks" his magic garment from his shoulders so that he might play the more important role of father (1.2.24). Here, we can agree with BBC director John

Gorrie's assertion that "the real magic of the play is in the words and in the relationships"¹²⁶ between characters. 1.2 also shows Prospero emphasizing the spiritual, but very human, virtue of memory, one of the three primary virtues which the more orthodox side of Renaissance neoplatonism, the Augustinian,¹²⁷ prescribed as the necessary prelude to understanding and a virtuous will.¹²⁸ In contrast to his other romances, The Tempest begins twelve years after the plot's initial crucial events, and shows its hero's spiritual growth without elaborate plot twists and swift passages of time. Here, memory becomes a "shaping power of present and future"¹²⁹ because Prospero looks with Miranda into "the dark backward and abysm of time" (1.2.50) in order to reveal a penitent attitude; for, he can now say that when the "liberal" arts became "all [his] study" (1.2.73-74) and his brother Antonio was allowed to run the state, in him "[He] ... awak'd an evil nature" (1.2.93). Thus, Prospero's "trust / like a good parent" (1.2.93-94) led his brother to usurp his dukedom.

Much more so than in the Duke of Measure for Measure (another poor governor), though somewhat similar to Timon (who also lives in a cave by the sea),¹³⁰ in Prospero we also see glimpses of bitterness. This state is psychologically appropriate in one whose very goodness led to his betrayal, and it accounts for the moments of anger which often surprise critics. For example, when Ariel fails to remember the horrid slavery under Sycorax from which Prospero freed this spirit, Prospero exclaims to him, "Thou liest, malignant thing!" (1.2.257); in another example, Prospero calls Caliban "most lying slave" (1.2.344), and seems to enjoy his promise to torture Caliban with pinches after he reminds him of the attempted rape of Miranda (1.2.368-70). Without denying Prospero's honesty here, which most of the internal evidence of the play supports, his emotions and treatment of his two slaves suggest a struggle which is appropriate to his role as magus. Renaissance neoplatonists commonly understood that a magus' power causes the "destruction of the freedom of others" and "creates a void around him" by reducing others "to the subhuman level of animals or things;"¹³¹ Auden also sees this danger, and his Prospero says, "I made a magic to ... blot for ever the gross insult of being a mere one among many."¹³² Given this danger, it is entirely appropriate that Ariel returns Prospero's call to "remember" (1.2.243, 247), asking him to fulfill his promise to give him "liberty" (1.2.245). As well, Caliban's own legitimate desire for freedom, his illegal actions notwithstanding, challenges Prospero not to

descend into anger, the emotion which Augustine saw as “a manifestation of pride.”¹³¹ Pride, as Faustus again illustrates so well, is the vice at the root of the reason why orthodox Renaissance Christians considered the hermetic tradition heretical,¹³⁴ and why Bacon too eventually condemns Agrippa and the secrecy of the magi in works such as The Masculine Birth of Time.¹³⁵ Just as the repetition of the original usurping plots of Antonio and Sebastian, parodied by Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano, lends suspense to the present action on the island, so Prospero’s spiritual struggle prevents him from being a static character. In Auden’s words, “thickheaded goodness for once is not a bore” (204-05). Gielgud’s famous 1957 Prospero especially demonstrated this, as he was “a man filled with anguish, struggling to rise above the memory of the ‘high wrongs’ he had endured,”¹³⁶ and he seemed to live “under the threat of being engulfed by his sense of being wronged.”¹³⁷ The “very magic” of Gielgud’s Prospero threatens to lead “him into fearful territory,”¹³⁸ though this does not equate Prospero’s magic with Sycorax’s, as a number of critics argue; as Patrick Grant usefully explains,

Plainly the evil magic belongs to Sycorax. What Shakespeare does say is that Prospero’s Neo-Platonist magic is good essentially because it enables Prospero to understand enough to forgive his enemies.... Shakespeare therefore presents Prospero as a Hermetic magus, but the play acknowledges the human hazards and characteristic illusions of this type of personality. The Tempest shows the education of Prospero as he spans the poles from Dee to Bacon.¹³⁹

For Grant, the “touchstone of the transformation is Miranda,”¹⁴⁰ because for both Bacon and Dee, “*caritas* is the true end of science,”¹⁴¹ and it is Prospero’s chief end in the play to act charitably towards his daughter. In response to Miranda’s “all-important question,”¹⁴² “I pray you ... your reason for raising this sea storm?” (1.2.176-77), Prospero’s sole direct answer is, “I have done nothing but in care of thee” (1.2.16). On the original voyage to the island, it was Miranda who “did preserve” Prospero, acting as a “cherubin ... infused with a fortitude from heaven” (1.2.152-54); perhaps Miranda served, like the cherubim around the garden of Eden, to “keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24) as Prospero seeks to establish his own Edenic garden. In Christianity and throughout Shakespeare’s romances, this way is fundamentally one of charity, and brings rare wonders; since the Latin root of Miranda’s name means “wonderful,” in her we see

the “association of wonder at the miraculous love of charity common in Christian tradition.”¹⁴³

Thus, Grant allegorically describes her as “the very idea of charity itself” who represents “the virtue which Prospero, like everyman, must learn to nurture.”¹⁴⁴

Further, since so much of Prospero’s project and the play’s plot consists of his efforts to bring his daughter a husband, Ferdinand, and thus keep the royal families living, it is also true that the charity Miranda evokes in her father is “the virtue most needful to sustain the civilization from which she emerges.”¹⁴⁵ Grant further notes “the commonplace Renaissance equation of *castitas* and *caritas*” (also vital in Milton’s Comus). Then, Grant describes Prospero’s feigned harsh treatment of the lovers, and his emphasis on Ferdinand not violating Miranda’s “virgin-knot” (4.1.15), as an example of “castigation (rendering chaste of passion) leading to a concord of higher love (*caritas*)”; this is another Renaissance commonplace, evident, for example, in The Faerie Queene.¹⁴⁶ Much of the ethos here is traceable to St. Augustine, especially Ferdinand’s classic statement of the reason he endures the hardships Prospero has imposed upon him:

There be some sports are painful, and their labor
Delight in them sets off; some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. (3.1.1-4)

In his Confessions, St. Augustine writes, “Yea, the very pleasures of human life men acquire by difficulties.... It is also ordered, that the affianced bride should not at once be given, lest as a husband he should hold cheap whom, as betrothed, he sighed not after” (VIII. 7).¹⁴⁷ This passage, so apt for Ferdinand, occurs in a discussion on “what then takes place in the soul ... on recovering the things it loves,” and one in which Augustine alludes to how “the storm tosses the sailors, threatens shipwreck,” but eventually lets them be “exceeding joyed” (VIII.7). Significant for The Tempest, as well, this passage is preceded by a discussion of penitence which leads to the supreme experience of “holy charity” (VIII.6).¹⁴⁸ Through Augustinian thought and imagery, then, The Tempest finds vivid new ways to portray the relationship between the virtues of charity and chastity so prevalent throughout Shakespeare’s romances.

The value of these virtues has been heavily contested by those who see them as a pretext for Prospero selfishly manipulating the lovers for his own ends. Leininger, as already noted, condemns Prospero for failing to give Miranda independence. Leininger admits that Prospero is

“acting out a role which he knows to be unjust, in order to cement the young couple’s love,” but claims that because Miranda, however, “has no way of knowing this,” she learns “absolute unthinking obedience.”¹⁴⁹ Yet Miranda does not obey her father, and his harshness, in fact, leads her to a strategy of deception similar to that practiced by “her father’s most dangerous enemy.”¹⁵⁰ As she tells Ferdinand, “My father / Is hard at study. Pray now, rest yourself. / He’s safe for these three hours” (3.1.19-21). Perhaps having learnt the dangers of acting as a “good parent” (1.2.99), Prospero has now acted to decrease Miranda’s dependence on him; certainly, this is the effect of his harshness. Leininger also condemns *The Tempest*’s “schematic representation of all virtue and vice as chastity and lust”¹⁵¹ for shifting attention away from Caliban’s enslavement. Apart from Leininger’s failure to recognize the virtue of charity, her views also present other ethical problems. Although the problems created by a master / slave relationship should not be obscured, neither should the fact of Caliban being a rapist. The problematic implications of Leininger’s values are suggested when, in her epilogue, Leininger’s Miranda pledges to join hands with Caliban. She says, “If either my father or I feel threatened by his real or imputed lust, we can build a pale around our side of the island, gather our own wood, cook our own food, and clean up after ourselves.”¹⁵² Does Leininger seriously advocate that rapists need not be arrested or that rape victims should be asked to “join hands” with their rapists? Leininger seemingly ignores these questions despite Caliban’s own unrepentant admittance that he is a rapist (1.2.349).

The broader ethical question as to the value Shakespeare places on chastity is also raised in Leininger’s new epilogue, when her Miranda says: “I cannot give assent to an ethical scheme that locates all virtue symbolically in one part of my anatomy. My virginity has little to do with the forces that will lead to good harvest or to greater social justice.”¹⁵³ The range of questions raised by this evaluation is very wide. First, does Shakespeare intend Ferdinand and Miranda to stand as an absolute condemnation of premarital sex, or as an important statement of the value of chastity? It is noteworthy that the dangers of an excessive punishment of fornication are also portrayed by Shakespeare in plays such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure*. At the same time, Shakespeare also often portrays the dangers of lust, especially male lust, and especially associates lust with murder (Cf. *Son.* 129). With these cases in mind, can we affirm with Leininger that the young lovers’ sexual conduct will have no bearing on their society’s well being? Shakespeare also writes (not just negatively but also) positively about the value of chastity, as

when, in the same speech where Ferdinand is logbearing, Shakespeare uses the imagery of childbirth to convey beautifully how a male who accepts the hardships of toil and of chastity can become the potential procreator of abundant, healthy new life:

This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labors pleasures. (3.1.4-7)

Miranda, though she has known no other men, has learned to loathe animal lust, and not only to support--the traditional role for young women--but actively to join Ferdinand both in rebelling against her father, and in helping to move the wood, for no reason other than her "good will" towards Ferdinand (3.1.30).

The striking contrast between the two loves of *caritas* and *cupiditas* again "seems very deliberate,"¹⁵⁴ and the beauty of married love most enthusiastically celebrated, in the Masque in 4.1, which Prospero has Ariel conjure up as a form of blessing upon the couple. This blessing comes only after Ferdinand's solemn promise that nothing shall ever "melt" his "honor into lust" (4.1.28); it is pointedly made clear during the masque that Venus and her son Cupid have been banished from the ceremonies (4.1.86-100). Of the deities that are present, first comes Iris, who as goddess of the rainbow "embodies, in both the classical and biblical traditions, divine providence."¹⁵⁵ "As God's pledge to Noah after the universal flood," rainbows show, as Herbert beautifully puts it, that "Storms are the triumph of his art" ("The Bag" 1.5).¹⁵⁶ Here Iris summons Ceres, goddess of the earth, in order to unite her with Juno, goddess of the sky and of marriage. Together these latter two sing a blessing upon the couple's "contract of true love" (4.1.106-117), and then call forth "nymphs" of the "windring brooks" (4.1.128) and "sunburned sicklemen" (4.1.134) for a fertility dance, which again symbolizes the union of diverse natural elements. This masque, like many in the Renaissance, is thus an "epiphany of providence" which seeks "to demonstrate the miraculous potentialities for harmony and peace inherent in the world."¹⁵⁷ Instead of allegorical meanings, though, what usually impresses theatre audiences is "the sense of fruition, the harmony and the harvest";¹⁵⁸ indeed, one member of the stage audience, Ferdinand, is so transported from his earlier grief as now to think "this place Paradise" (4.1.125).

Before this beautiful scene, however, the seemingly harsh, but essentially life affirming,

nature of Prospero's project is further illustrated by his actions toward the "three men of sin" (3.3.53) who reenact the attempted regicide and fratricide of twelve years earlier. It is Ariel who confronts Antonio and Sebastian and so names them, illustrating how he himself might be derived from the Hebrew angel in Isaiah 29, whom the Geneva Bible margin¹⁵⁹ glosses as the "lion of God" (Is. 29:1). Normally, Ariel is a "pure intelligence," like angels of medieval theology.¹⁶⁰ Yet, to confront the nobles Ariel takes the figure of a harpy (as might have been suggested by the *Aeneid*)¹⁶¹ and often behaves like "a native English fairy," such as Puck.¹⁶² Whatever he is, the most apt description of his effect on others is best stated by Auden's Prospero, who says to Ariel, "For all things, / In your company, can be themselves" (204). By using music and song to calm Ferdinand's sea-passion, as Ficino would suggest, Ariel is gently lyrical. Initially, his "strange and solemn music" (3.3.19) also brings forth a banquet that even Sebastian thinks is some mythological paradise. But, as Prospero slyly warns in an aside, "Praise in departing" (3.3.39). The disappearing banquet scene here may allude, in addition to classical references, to Job 20:23, "When [the wicked man] is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him." In the shape of a harpy, Ariel takes on a fierceness akin to divine wrath: "I have made you mad; / And even with such-like valor men hang and drown / Their proper selves" (3.3.58-59).¹⁶³ Ariel mocks the nobles' attempts to strike him and repeats Prospero's and his own emphasis on memory, saying, "remember / (For that's my business to you)" (3.3.68-69), and then recounts their crimes to them. Especially for the central character whom Prospero's project will transform, Alonso, Ariel's words set in motion guilt which threatens to bring the "perdition" that Prospero had earlier promised would not fall on any creature in the vessel (1.2.30). The "seas and shores" that have taken his son, Ariel tells the King, "do pronounce by me / Ling'ring perdition (3.3.76-77), whose "wraths" can only be avoided by repentance, "heart's sorrow and a clear life ensuing" (3.3.79-82). Alonso's final words in the scene, however, are dangerously close to suicidal despair, as he pledges to seek Ferdinand "deeper than e'er plummet sounded / And with him there lie mudded" (3.3.101). Ominous though this sounds, by now seeing his own wickedness Alonso "inwardly undergoes the voyage to the bottom of the sea" evoked in Ariel's "Full fathom five" (1.2.397-405) where perhaps a sea-change may occur.¹⁶⁴

Ariel also acts as conscience to the other party on the island intent on regicide, the comic crew of Stephano the drunken butler, Trinculo the clown, and their new found ally, Caliban.

Hilarious in the farcical physical spectacle of the four-legged monster in 2.2, this party is vital in making The Tempest a comedy rather than tragedy or mystical high art; thus they are onstage for two of the play's first six scenes. As sources of comedy, these figures illustrate Sidney's teaching that the purpose of this genre is to indicate "the common errors of our life" so that "it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one."¹⁶⁵ In many ways, the drunks are a distillation of the worst human desires shown in the other plots of The Tempest. Stephano's lively bawdy song at 2.2.47 might introduce him as a kin of merry Shakespearean revellers such as Falstaff or Sir Toby Belch, but his lust for power (cf. 106-07) reeks more of Malvolio. Trinculo is a drunken comic buffoon, but he follows Caliban's call to "freedom! freedom" (2.2.186) as mindlessly as the monster follows Stephano. All three, perhaps most damningly, revel in Caliban's lustful plan to pander Miranda to Stephano (3.2.102-114). All three are thus chided by Ariel in 3.2, as—in a line obviously disbelieved by post-colonial critics—he imitates the voice of Trinculo and says "thou liest" (3.2.45) after Caliban calls Prospero a "tyrant" (3.2.45), thus inciting all three to fighting before they attempt to harmonize a three-part song:

Flout 'em and scout 'em.

And scout 'em and flout 'em!

Thought is free. (3.2.121-23)

This song should have "each singer starting one line after the other," but it ends in "chaotic noise,"¹⁶⁶ indicating the discordant harmony created by random mocks and jeers being called either "thought" or "free". Significantly for our judgement of his character, Caliban recognizes this cacophony, saying, "That's not the tune" (3.2.124). When Ariel then plays the correct "tune of our catch" (3.2.126) his harmonious music terrifies and moves to repentance both Trinculo, who shrieks, "O forgive me my sins!," and Stephano, who despite initial defiance eventually exclaims, "Mercy upon us!" (3.2.130-31). Again, Prospero through Ariel is attempting to awaken in these criminals both an awareness of guilt and an understanding of their need for mercy.

Caliban's musical recognition here sets him apart from his two fellow assassins (a usefully paranomasic descriptive term, surprisingly not played upon by Shakespeare), a point immediately given unmistakable emphasis by Shakespeare when the monster tries to calm the others by saying,

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,

Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
 That if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open, and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
 I cried to dream again. (3.2.135-143)

This set speech, and Caliban's just cited awareness of musical harmony, suggestively places him among those characters in the play whose imaginative and in some sense spiritual inner life is able to hear Ariel's music; even his moral life, by play's end, seems to be affected more than that of Antonio, Sebastian, Stephano, or Trinculo. This fact constitutes perhaps the strongest reason why Caliban cannot simply be cast as a savage or sub-human creature colonized by Prospero. Indeed, it is the latter two Italian nobles who are parodied as exploitive colonists: they set themselves up as gods, spread "celestial liquor," and even talk about returning him to the Old World to charge money and display him as "a dead Indian" (2.2.34, 69). Caliban can, arguably, be compared to and has, in fact, been played as an incredibly wide variety of characters, including a cannibal, "noble savage," Darwinian "missing link," "victim of colonial power," "'natural' man, a creature of sensibility," "American Indian," and even a black "uneducated field" slave.¹⁶⁷ Finally, though, Caliban must be admitted as one of Shakespeare's most unique creations, among those whom criticism will never definitively understand.

However, Caliban should not be sentimentalized, nor the comic subplot trivialized. The beautiful masque in 4.1 is interrupted when, in an aside, Prospero suddenly says, "I had forgot that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates" (4.1.139-40), and then stops the masque. For audiences, this moment "will be seen as a surprise, a conundrum, a disturbance of illusion."¹⁶⁸ Numerous critics have especially wondered why Prospero is "so angered" at this moment, for Miranda comments that "Never till this day / Saw I him touch'd with anger, so distemper'd" (4.1.144-45). Kermode notes only Prospero's "apparently inadequate motivation,"¹⁶⁹ but post-colonial critics argue that "the excess obviously marks the recurrent difficulty that Caliban causes Prospero."¹⁷⁰ Prospero's immediate words do not coincide with Miranda's description, however, as he tries to calm the "dismay'd" Ferdinand by saying, "be cheerful, sir," and then

delivering the play's most famous speech:

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-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 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. (4.1.148-58)

This remarkable metadramatic unravelling of illusion, with its fleeting spirits named "actors" and immediate allusion (for Shakespeare and his audience) to the "great globe itself," has unsurprisingly been described as the despairing last words of the dramatist to his art. Or, applied more precisely to Prospero, the emotion here is seen as "anger" because the "art to which he has devoted so many years of study is limited to externals" and "does not enable him to alter the fundamental nature of things."¹⁷¹ The last line, especially, has been interpreted as meaning that reality itself is a fleeting illusion, and life a meaningless dream. Is this interpretation required?

Certainly it is possible, and we note that this is the third time in the play that a spectacle created by Prospero has faded to be replaced by the appearance of seemingly implacable human nature; here especially, it makes the magus "vex'd" (4.1.158). However, how can Prospero's speech, if simply a statement of despair, be taken as a way to make Ferdinand "cheerful"? Prospero has already referred to the masque as a "vanity of [his] art" (4.1.41), implying that it will not contain the real virtue of his art, and though the speech certainly undercuts the infinite sustainability of the peaceful pageant the lovers have just witnessed, its meaning turns on one's interpretation of the words "rounded" and "sleep." Although Schmidt translates this entire difficult line as meaning that "the whole round or course of life has its beginning and end in a sleep, is nothing but a sleep,"¹⁷² Prospero has certainly not said that the *whole* of life is a sleep. A very different interpretation can be made if one does not assume Prospero despairing here, and if one

employs Schmidt's definition of "rounded" as a verb meaning "to surround, to encompass."¹⁷³ Rather than "annihilated," "rounded" might refer to the cyclic progressions of nature or to a completed circle, such as the one Prospero will draw in 5.1.¹⁷⁴ If this nature includes the supernatural, then "sleep" could very well be not an ominous end, but the false face of death--as described by St. Paul (1 Cor.15:51)--which the leading characters throughout Shakespeare's romances experience before they are awakened into a life given by the Eternal Life. This interpretation cannot be rejected, either, by the fact that it here accompanies Prospero's bitterness, for as neoplatonic *magus* he has believed in eternity for a long time without doing the acts that would ease his pain, and these acts are only performed in Act 5.

The most significant evidence for this interpretation comes when hope similarly founded upon Divinity again combats despair at play's end. Before that, it is undoubtedly true that the interruption of the masque does signal Prospero's return to political problems, and his internal struggles with the just exercise of power. Caliban and company are easily chastised by Ariel, but the broader question of how Prospero will finally deal with his enemies is unclear. Act 3 closes with Prospero exulting that his enemies are "all knit up / In their distractions" (3.3.89), while Act 4 closes with Prospero again triumphantly saying that, "At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies" (4.1.262-63). At this point we do not know that Prospero will not take revenge, and hence these "summations," as James Black argues, "are ominous."¹⁷⁵ As Act 5 opens and Prospero confidently announces that "Now does my project gather to a head, / My charms crack not" (5.1.1-2), we might wonder if these same charms will shortly give his "labors end" (4.1.264) by ending the lives of his enemies. Black also notes that "the word 'project' here "is frequently interpreted as suggesting projection, the last phase of a scientific philosopher's or alchemist's experiment,"¹⁷⁶ and the possibility of a malicious use of magic seems especially strong during the first part of Prospero's long speech addressed to "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves" (5.1.33). Much of this speech is a close paraphrase of Medea's speech in Ovid's Metamorphoses, which in the Renaissance was viewed "as witchcraft's great set-piece,"¹⁷⁷ but one which well illustrated the unnatural dangers of sorcery since Medea "goes on using her magic to act out revenge plots."¹⁷⁸ What especially raises the question of the virtue of Prospero's magic, however, is the claim--which occurs here for the first time in this play--made in the first section of this speech: "Graves at my command / Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth / By my

so potent art" (5.1.48-50). By setting this claim amidst the speech likening Prospero to Medea, and potentially even to Sycorax, Shakespeare here considers the problem raised but left unexplored by Cerimon. Should not the power to raise the dead, in "the Christian era," "belong uniquely to Christ and his Father"?¹⁷⁹ Is not Prospero in danger of becoming like Faustus, who wants a profession in which one could "make men to live eternally, / Or, being dead, raise them to life again" (Faustus 1.1.24-25)?

This issue is less disturbing within the sequence of Act 5, however, for Prospero's "Medea speech" is merely dramatic balancing to further illustrate the potential danger of magic. Just before delivering it, having again been reminded by Ariel of the "tender" affections that a "human" should hold for one's fellow beings, and though he acknowledges that "with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick" (5.1.19-21, 25), Prospero had already chosen not to take revenge against his enemies:

Yet, with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go, release them, Ariel.
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves. (5.1.26-31)

Prospero's renunciation of vengeance here is often seen as the climax of the play, though many have questioned his stated motive for doing so, since neither Antonio nor Sebastian shows any outward sign of actually repenting. Sebastian does at least speak of the "Most high miracle" which Prospero achieves at the end of the play (5.1.178), but from Antonio there is only a cold alienated silence, which prompts Auden to have him repetitively speak these words:

Your all is partial, Prospero;
My will is all my own:
Your need to love shall never know
Me: I am I, Antonio,
By choice myself alone. (212)

Already in the just cited speech, though, Prospero shows he has "few illusions about profound

change"¹⁸⁰ by saying that the freed nobles "shall be themselves" (5.1.32). Despite the relapse into Medea's language, and immediately after his climactic suggestion of the power to resurrect, Prospero consciously and deliberately declares, "But this rough magic / I here abjure" (5.1.50-51). He will finally ask only for "some heavenly music" (5.1.52)--the same charm used in the other romances to signify harmony and create new life--to bring his enemies into a magic circle and restore what has been lost, before promising to finally "drown my book" (5.1.57). Inside the circle, before awaking them, Prospero speaks to each, commending Gonzalo and recounting the sins of Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, though it is only the latter--perhaps it requires a practice run?--whom Prospero here forgives, saying "I do forgive thee, / Unnatural though thou art" (5.1.78-79). After the nobles are awakened, some have argued that Prospero's forgiveness of Antonio for the second time has a "somewhat nasty taste," and is more "Senecan, rather than Christian," since for Seneca "it is one kind of revenge to neglect a man as not worth it."¹⁸¹ In contrast to the other romances, this critic thinks that in The Tempest, "Repentance and forgiveness seem to remain as fossils in the play, rather than as active principles."¹⁸² This interpretation is understandable given that in an aside Prospero chides Sebastian and Antonio (5.1.126-28), and he cannot hide his still present anger while speaking forgiveness to Antonio, even admitting that he can only call him "most wicked sir" rather than "brother" (5.1.130-31). Still, Prospero is perhaps encouraging the forgetting of their sins by choosing not to reveal their villainy to Alonso; and, in general, we must respond to Dobrée's claims as Prospero does to the aside where Sebastian says, (citing a person unknown in Senecan metaphysics): "The devil speaks in him" (5.1.129). Prospero's unusual ability to overhear this aside again suggests some "heavenly power" in him (5.1.105), and he responds as directly as Christ commands in Matt 5: 37: "No" (5.1.130). Then, showing that clearsighted, heroically Christian forgiveness which understands exactly what it pardons and the cost of doing so--the kind of forgiveness which forgives "seventy times seven time" thy brother's fault (Matt. 18:21), or which a good priest offers in the confessional--Prospero grants Antonio absolution by deliberately and emphatically stating, "I do forgive / Thy rankest fault--all of them" (5.1.131-32). Nor is the wonder of this act diminished by Prospero's immediate demand for the return of his dukedom, for consider the consequences to its citizens if Milan remains ruled by an unrepentant criminal such as Antonio. Also, consider the consequences for the potential murderers' own souls; instead, as Auden's Sebastian says, though we are "wicked

still," "my proof of mercy" is "that I wake without a crown" (220).

Unchanged though two of the nobles appear to be, then, even in their case Prospero's project is at least presently successful. Far more successful, and more crucial to the success of his ultimate ends, are Prospero's efforts to move King Alonso to repentance while also saving him from self-damning despair. Even after seeing Prospero he seems prone to the latter, for thinking his son dead he says, "Irreparable is the loss, and patience / Says it is past her cure" (5.1.140-41). Piqued by this failing hope in this primary romance virtue, Prospero rightly rebukes him by saying, "I rather think you have not sought her help" (5.1.142-43). He then tries to create empathy with his fellow king by speaking of his own "like loss" (5.1.144). Just the mention that this loss is a daughter, though, prompts Alonso to exclaim, "A daughter?" (5.1.148), and to repent not by offering to return to the sea as a suicide, but rather to act as an atoning sacrifice:

O heavens, that they were living both in Naples,
The King and Queen there! That they were, I wish
Myself were mudded in that oozy bed
Where my son lies. (5.1.149-152)

This "redeeming substitutive bargain ... returns not only his son but also Prospero's daughter," for it "pronounces what Prospero wants and needs pronounced, endorsement of the betrothal."¹⁸³

This endorsement is given even before Alonso is aware of Prospero's efforts on behalf of Miranda and Ferdinand. After Ferdinand's explanation of how he became betrothed without his father's consent, the still repentant Alonso affirms his new identity as Miranda's father, saying "I am hers"; yet, he also ponders the similarly difficult fate of Lear, saying, "But O, how oddly will it sound that I / Must ask my child forgiveness!" (5.1.196). Now Prospero compassionately offers the same counsel of "creative forgetting of wrongs"¹⁸⁴ which he had followed in being silent about the other nobles' sins: "There, sir, stop. / Let us not burthen our remembrances with / A heaviness that's gone" (5.1.198-99). This recalls Paulina's advice to Leontes, "What's gone and what's past help / Should be past grief" (3.2.223) (though later she manages to bring back some of what was gone); in Prospero's case, the chief "wonder" his music reveals is when he shows Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess together in his cell (5.1.172).

This seemingly everyday sight has rich symbolic implications, which many critics have pointed out. Dover Wilson, for example, suggests that "the ancient feud between Milan and

Naples has softened into the mimic war of ivory armies who shed no blood."¹⁸⁵ Other critics, meanwhile, argue that "chess could obviously symbolize self-control, the exercise of intellect and the practice of art,"¹⁸⁶ and a final sign that the sexual opposites have achieved joyful play without the "expense of spirit" of lust (Son. 129). This moment is the "most high miracle" of The Tempest (5.1.178); it is the proof that, as in the other romances, "Though the seas threaten, they are merciful" (5.1.178). Further, this moment reminds us that Prospero's project is to give life. For though The Tempest has no dramatic resurrection, as in the earlier romances, in the speech where Ferdinand credits "immortal Providence" (5.1.189) for bringing him and Miranda together, it is Prospero "of whom," he says, "I have received a second life" (5.1.194-95). With the promise of future life that this couple embodies, then, it is entirely appropriate that this moment reissues divine blessings of joy that closely parallel those in the other romances. Here, Gonzalo echoes Hermione (WT 5.3.122-23)¹⁸⁷ by saying, "Look down, you gods, / And on this couple drop a blessed crown!" (5.1.201-02), while Alonso echoes earlier romance fathers by saying, "Give me your hands. / Let grief and sorrow still embrace his heart / That doth not wish you joy!" (5.1.213-14).

Critics, too, generally celebrate these moments of joy to the extent that they understand and properly value both the meaning of marriage and the possibility of new life that it entails. Rarely is there the outrightly cynical response often wrongly assumed to be the only valid interpretation of two other joyful remarks also made during this section of the play. The first, Miranda exclaiming, "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people isn't!" (5.1.183), has become primarily known for Huxley's ironic vision of a dystopian future. Most critics have taken Prospero's aside, "'Tis new to thee" (5.1.184), as a cynical reminder that Miranda does not understand the evil of men like Antonio. Surely the wisdom of experience is part of the meaning here, but is it not also true, in many important senses, that the world Miranda and Ferdinand are entering *is* new? The two lovers are newly united, new political allegiances have been created, and new horizons are so radically open that perhaps the sins of the past can be at least partially forgotten as well as deliberately forgiven. Perhaps even Antonio's cynical response to Gonzalo's utopian vision can be redeemed, since by preparing this new world Prospero is "willing enough to accept that the latter end of his commonwealth must forget the beginning"¹⁸⁸ (cf. 2.1.159). Such cynicism never deterred Gonzalo, of course, but can his similarly utopian summation of the lost / found pattern typical of the romances and The Tempest be similarly redeemed? With great

rhetorical flourish, Gonzalo recalls the events of the play as he sees them:

Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue
Should become kings of Naples? O, rejoice
Beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost; Prospero, his dukedom
In a poor isle; and all of us, ourselves,
When no man was his own. (5.1.205-212)

A few critics claim that the play's providential pattern calls us to see it as Gonzalo does, but most ridicule, as harshly as Antonio or Sebastian might, the excess of copying its tale "with gold on lasting pillars." Gonzalo undercuts himself, in Auden's poem, by saying,

Truths today admitted, owe
Nothing to the councillor
In whose blooming eloquence
Honesty becomes untrue. (215)

Others regard Gonzalo's speech as merely subjective: "Not *quite* accurate, but then what account of a play ever is?"¹⁸⁹ Yet, David Young, who in the following is clearly reflecting on Auden's The Sea and the Mirror, also points towards the wider value of the play's interrogation of human perception:

It is possible to see The Tempest as a sort of huge mirror held up to the audience, a giant metaphor for the value of art constructed by an artist who understood very thoroughly both the strength and the limitations of his craft. The metaphor is worth exploring: all the characters who are washed ashore at Prospero's bidding undergo an experience of self-knowledge, which may or may not change them. Any given audience is in a sense washed ashore too, to accompany the cast on their adventures. In both cases the experience will be illusory--the result of art, shadowy, an insubstantial pageant--but that will not make it any less valuable. On the contrary, it will make possible events and recognitions not otherwise attainable.... Evil will not be

changed or dismissed--that is beyond art's power--but it will be located and described for a clearer understanding, and momentarily subdued that the good and the beautiful may shine more clearly.¹⁹⁰

This is a suggestive evaluation of not only the value of The Tempest but also art itself, and one which attempts to avoid describing the self-reflective quality of the play as hopelessly subjective. However, Young underestimates the power of recognitions really to change evil--as suggested in the stories of the lovers, Alonso, and especially Prospero himself--and he is unhelpfully vague as to the nature of the good which shines forth at play's end. When good change does occur, Gonzalo seems to suggest, it is the consequence not just of a potentially narcissistic mirror of self-knowledge, but an accurate understanding of one's true self, and an accompanying loss of uncertainty in one's identity. Auden is right that these "truths admitted" are not owed to "blooming eloquence"; however, neither is Gonzalo's truth limited to the classical oracle's call to "Know thyself." Rather, it is in three final, crucial acts of The Tempest that we are shown, as at the conclusion of Cymbeline, that "the truth shall make [us] free" (John 8:32). True recognition results in real freedom, and it is in this freedom that we must seek the true good of The Tempest.

Minor hints toward this movement, while also unifying the play's plot, are provided first by the Boatswain, who along with the other sailors was "dead of sleep" (5.1.230). After nightmarish sounds he and his mates have been awakened to a ship "tight and yare" (5.1.224) and "straightaway, at liberty" (5.1.235). Recalling Antigonous' ship (WT 3.3.), the preservation of life signified by this ship is wondrous. As Alonso says, "These are not natural events" (5.1.227). Supernatural powers are still being employed through Ariel, though thoroughly human figures are next presented in Trinculo and Sebastian. Trinculo has been in "such a pickle" (5.1.282) on the island that perhaps his identity has been permanently drowned; as he puts it, "I fear me will never out of my bones" (5.1.283). Sebastian's identity is likewise obscured, as even in his own mind he has "fallen from being king o' the isle" (5.1.288) to saying of himself, "I am not Stephano, but a cramp" (5.1.286-87). While earlier Prospero had pinched Caliban with cramps, now it seems that the identity of Trinculo and Stephano is self-inflicted, the torture of a bad hangover.

Caliban also fears being "pinch'd to death" (5.1.276), and his identity also remains obscured, to some extent, though its potentially positive aspects and clear movement toward freedom again clearly set him above his cohorts in crime. Some aspect of Caliban's identity,

surely, is suggested by the famous lines in which Prospero says of him, "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275). This line was a favorite of those who allegorized Caliban as part of Prospero's soul, since it showed an acceptance of a "dark" or "shadow" nature;¹⁹¹ post-colonial critics, on the other hand, often took the line literally and simply as Prospero reaffirming ownership of his slave.¹⁹² Between these two extremes, though, it might be argued that Prospero is in some sense acknowledging responsibility for Caliban, since that is what he has asked the other nobles to do for Stephano and Trinculo. Naming Caliban "darkness" again suggests the anger from which Prospero cannot entirely rid himself. However, the line as a whole also suggests that Prospero's earlier designation of Caliban as "a devil" (4.1.188) may be more the product of passion than reason, and that there is in some way a relational bond between them. Some critics, citing Prospero's identification with Medea, have even seen his acknowledgment of the dark side of his power as leading to a feeling of kinship with Sycorax and a near parental feeling for Caliban.¹⁹³ However unlikely this seems, in 5.1 Prospero does for some reason begin again to "nurture" (4.1.189) Caliban by offering conditional pardon. He sends him to his cell, saying, "As you look / To have my pardon, trim it handsomely" (5.1.293-94). There is no question that this act maintains, at the very least, Prospero's authority and, at most, the master / slave relationship deplored by the post-colonial critics, but it must also be admitted that Prospero and the other humans soon leave the island (far sooner than any historical colonial power) to Caliban alone. Thus, even in this final action there is an implied relinquishing of Prospero's power in order to set Caliban free. Perhaps most importantly, some kinship may be established between Caliban and Prospero if we take more seriously both Caliban's use of a fundamentally Christian term and his rejection of idolatry in his final words during the play. For the first time, he responds to Prospero's commands by saying,

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool! (5.1.295-97)

Post-colonial critics see this passage as a contrived means to reassert Prospero's authority,¹⁹⁴ but they can only view it thus by ignoring its potentially theological sense. Considered as a rejection of false authority and an appeal not only to Prospero but also divine mercy, Caliban's final speech

can be seen as achieving--in the ambiguous sense in which Shakespeare clouds all our understanding of this mysterious character--a freedom in grace that closely parallels what Prospero also seeks for in *his* closing words.

A renunciation of power leading to a renewed sense of identity and a new found freedom is achieved much less ambiguously and much more happily (as one would expect from their primarily positive relationship thoroughly the play) between Prospero and Ariel. Prospero makes the granting of Ariel's freedom his last act within the play proper, though he has promised to do so throughout the play and especially in Act 5, where this promise moves Ariel to sing "Merrily, merrily" (5.1.93), and moves us to aesthetic delight in this wondrous character who shall "live now, / Under the blossom that hangs on the bough" (5.1.93-94). Ariel's aesthetic virtues and final song remind some "of Plato's familiar comparison of the poet to a honey-gathering bee in the garden of the muses,"¹⁹⁵ while others are moved to call him "the genius of dramatic poetry."¹⁹⁶ Yet because Ariel converts Prospero from the spirit of revenge at the start of 5.1, perhaps this "conversion is an aesthetic one" akin to the effects of empathetic love which Shelley argues that good art and literature should have.¹⁹⁷ Prospero keeps Ariel as his primary instrument of power right until the very end of the play, and his final liberation does suggest Shakespeare allegorically giving up his art after it has revealed a humane aesthetic power which, like Auden's Ariel, allows "all things" to "be themselves" (204). A similar meaning also applies to Prospero, however, for by renouncing power his own identity as simply another frail human being suddenly becomes apparent; again, Auden is apt, for his Prospero tells Ariel: "I am glad I have freed you, / So at last I can really believe I shall die. / For under your influence death is inconceivable" (203).

How this acceptance of identity leads to freedom is made most clear, or rather most mysterious and wondrously rare, in Prospero's epilogue. Immediately Shakespeare establishes that Prospero is no longer a magus but now simply a human being, having him say, "Now my charms are all o'erthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own, / Which is most faint" (1-3). This, "the most artificial of Shakespeare's plays, and the most mysterious and dreamlike, ends with a man asking to be accepted as a man, in understanding and indulgence."¹⁹⁸ As in most epilogues, there is an appeal for applause, guised in the gorgeously apt metaphor, "Gentle breath of yours my sails / Must fill" (11-12), and then there is also a familiar call for the audience to reenact actions or attitudes that they have just witnessed. Yet the call here is unique in

Shakespeare, because of its unusual origin, purpose, and reversal of roles from within the play proper. Prospero “places himself in the same relation to the audience as previously Ariel, the Italians, and also Caliban, had stood to him”;¹⁹⁹ like them, he asks to be freed. Most “unexpected” though, is the again similar fear that “my ending is despair” (15), an emotion which Prospero had “never recognized within himself throughout the play and which his very name seems to deny.”²⁰⁰ Perhaps finally showing the extent of the struggle to renounce power, and the difficulty of both living and facing death without his life sustaining art, Prospero sounds as frail and despairing as many of the play’s other characters in momentarily suggesting that without his “art to enchant ... my ending is despair” (14-15). Yet, using the same remedy as the sailors in Act 1 and numerous repentant characters in Act 5—humble prayer petitioning the mercy of God—Prospero nearly paraphrases the words of the Lord’s Prayer²⁰¹ and concludes the play by saying that he will end in despair,

Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free. (16-20)

Prospero’s final prayer has been described by scholars in vaguely religious terms as a “vision” that fades before that of God,²⁰² or in humanistic terms as “a celebration of the theme of restoring, sustaining, and renewing power of love,”²⁰³ but the theological experience here described is at once more clearly Christian and more mysteriously, luminously suggestive of the power of transcendent prayer. The frail Prospero gives to prayer the same power of absolute mercy and forgiveness which he has clearly granted the characters once under his power. In accepting this principle for himself, he is “reliev'd” (16) and possibly even “reliving” the same joy that the others felt in Act 5. As well, “that a fictional character should ask a real audience for prayer” perhaps suggests that Prospero—and by extension Shakespeare—wishes the audience “to *imagine* prayer and openness to grace as a possible means to human freedom from guilt and sin.”²⁰⁴ Perhaps, if they do so, an “eschatological perspective ... joins the aesthetic one in the Epilogue” and the audience could see that “all human words, deeds, and creations depend for their final meaning and their only substantiality on their subordination to the work of Mercy.”²⁰⁵

Auden's Caliban, of all people, concludes his long monologue with similar thoughts, saying that actors face despair, "no way out," until they discover "the real Word which is our only *raison d'être*"; not that this changes evil, for

our shame, our fear, our incorrigible staginess, all wish and no resolve, are still, and more intensely than ever, all we have: only now it is not in spite of them but with them that we are blessed by that Wholly Other Life from which we are separated by an essential emphatic gulf of which our contrived fissures of mirror and proscenium arch--we understand them at last--are feebly figurative signs, so that all our meanings are reversed and it is precisely in its negative image of Judgment that we can positively envisage Mercy; it is just here, among the ruins and the bones, that we may rejoice in the perfected Work which is not ours. (249-50)

Auden here poetically recreates in Caliban the miracle of a profound Christian theological understanding, and in so doing offers an illuminating response to the close of The Tempest. It should also be added, though, that any spectator with similar religious horizons could have a similar response. If they see The Tempest's concluding "eschatological perspective," then "the audience wins a freedom that is identical with Prospero's freedom to renew every traveller to his isle."²⁰⁶ In other words, the audience also gains an identity before the mysterious, merciful God figured in The Tempest; in turn, this truth gives them a freedom that they can exercise only by giving the same gift back to Prospero.

Despite Auden's poetic authority, an explicitly Christian interpretation and evaluation of The Tempest's closing mystery "rings alarm bells"²⁰⁷ in critic Susan Snyder, who fears an inability to remove religious blinders. Snyder initially assumes an agnosticism about "to what extent Auden is claiming Shakespeare's collaboration in his final Christian vision,"²⁰⁸ but this response soon gives way to assured atheism when she asserts that Prospero's words, "Our little life is rounded with a sleep" (4.1.157-58), mean that he "does not end with a transcendent reality in capital letters, but rather in a silence more non-committal."²⁰⁹ Questionable though a determination to end The Tempest in the middle of Act 4 rather than the end of Act 5 may be, an even more determinedly atheistic interpretation comes from the Vaughns' book length study of Caliban. It describes the closing speech of Auden's Caliban as "almost Sartrean" and accurately cites this Caliban as saying that, "There is nothing to say. There never has been--and our wills chuck in their hands--There is

no way out. There never was." The Vaughns then conclude that "The Tempest, like life itself, has lost its metaphysical certainty."²¹⁰ Like Snyder misreading Prospero, the Vaughns fail to read Caliban to his conclusion, and thus fail to hear a remedy for Sartrean despair. Although Shakespeare's Prospero and Auden's Caliban remain distinctive dramatic characters, they can both be understood, coherently and intelligibly, as offering a beautifully Christian prayer for forgiveness and reconciliation. It must also be said that this final prayer in The Tempest does not obscure the play's preceding, wondrously wide range of historical and imaginative experience. Rather, it deepens and enhances or, as Lonergan would say, sublates that experience so as to also include an experience of transcendent divine mystery. Only those with "ears to hear" (Matt. 11: 15) are likely to experience this mystery, but it does not follow that this play requires a gnostic criticism. Anyone who listens to the music of Ariel and the meaning of Prospero's prayer can know the wondrously mysterious, beautiful way in which The Tempest remains able to fulfill Prospero's project and keep us living--not by ourselves, like Antonio, but rather in prayerful relationship with others, and with God; in the last words of Auden's Caliban, "the sounded note is the restored relation" (250). Although in Milan "every third thought" will be Prospero's "grave" (5.1.312), and despite our inevitable association with the implacable presence of evil in our world, by the conclusion of The Tempest Prospero's project may not only "please" (Epilogue l. 13), but also restore us in the faith, hope, and above all charity needed to sail the seas once more.

Ch. 6 Endnotes

- ¹ Smith, "Kaleidoscope" 1.
- ² Johnson 135.
- ³ Daniell 33.
- ⁴ Hazlitt, Characters 238.
- ⁵ Coleridge, Lectures 146.
- ⁶ Nuttall 5.
- ⁷ Coleridge, Lectures 182.
- ⁸ Coleridge, Lectures 146.
- ⁹ Nuttall 2.
- ¹⁰ James Russell Lowell, qtd. Nuttall 12.
- ¹¹ Knight, Crown 226. Knight is describing Still's allegory.
- ¹² Wagner 126.
- ¹³ Kermode, Tmp. lxxxiii.
- ¹⁴ Nuttall 13.
- ¹⁵ Dowden 417.
- ¹⁶ Knight, Crown 230.
- ¹⁷ Knight, Crown 255.
- ¹⁸ Spencer 45.
- ¹⁹ Wilson 21.
- ²⁰ Kermode, Tmp. lxxiv.
- ²¹ Knight, Shakespearean Tempest 247.
- ²² Knight, Crown 224.
- ²³ Kermode, Tmp. xxiv.
- ²⁴ Kermode, Tmp. lxi.
- ²⁵ Kermode, Tmp. xxv.
- ²⁶ Kermode, Tmp. lxxi.
- ²⁷ Kermode, Tmp. lxxx.
- ²⁸ Kermode, Tmp. xxiv.
- ²⁹ Paul Brown 48.
- ³⁰ Paul Brown 48.
- ³¹ Barker and Hulme 199.
- ³² Barker and Hulme 198-200.
- ³³ Paul Brown 59.
- ³⁴ Barker and Hulme 199.
- ³⁵ Barker and Hulme 220.
- ³⁶ Barker and Hulme 200.
- ³⁷ Barker and Hulme 195.
- ³⁸ Barker and Hulme 195.
- ³⁹ Barker and Hulme 196.
- ⁴⁰ Barker and Hulme 197.
- ⁴¹ Frye, "Introduction" 66.
- ⁴² Barker and Hulme 198.
- ⁴³ Kermode, Tmp. lxxv.
- ⁴⁴ Barker and Hulme 202-03.
- ⁴⁵ Barker and Hulme 203-204.
- ⁴⁶ Paul Brown 68.
- ⁴⁷ Greenblatt 26.
- ⁴⁸ Leininger 207.
- ⁴⁹ Leininger 210.

- ⁶⁰ Leininger 211.
- ⁶¹ Leininger 214.
- ⁶² Orgel 5-6.
- ⁶³ Orgel 53.
- ⁶⁴ Orgel 53.
- ⁶⁵ Orgel 54.
- ⁶⁶ Felperin, "In Our Time" 171.
- ⁶⁷ Felperin, "In Our Time" 171.
- ⁶⁸ Van Doren 288.
- ⁶⁹ Coleridge, Lectures 138.
- ⁷⁰ Bate 243.
- ⁷¹ Bate 243.
- ⁷² Bate 243.
- ⁷³ Skura 47.
- ⁷⁴ Jourdain 134.
- ⁷⁵ Daniells 72.
- ⁷⁶ Skura 47.
- ⁷⁷ Dawson 72.
- ⁷⁸ Felperin, "In Our Time" 181.
- ⁷⁹ Barker and Hulme 193.
- ⁸⁰ Vaughn and Vaughn 162-63.
- ⁸¹ Retamar 24.
- ⁸² Qtd. Felperin "In Our Time" 176-77.
- ⁸³ Knight, Crown 255.
- ⁸⁴ Bullough, Vol. 8, 244-45.
- ⁸⁵ Cartelli 112.
- ⁸⁶ Felperin, "In Our Time" 173.
- ⁸⁷ Felperin, "In Our Time" 173.
- ⁸⁸ Felperin, "In Our Time" 173.
- ⁸⁹ Bate 241.
- ⁹⁰ Brockbank 385.
- ⁹¹ Levin 70.
- ⁹² Felperin, Romance 249.
- ⁹³ Felperin, Romance 250.
- ⁹⁴ Felperin, Romance 248.
- ⁹⁵ Nuttall 160.
- ⁹⁶ Auerbach, qtd. Nuttall 24-25.
- ⁹⁷ Nuttall 53.
- ⁹⁸ Nuttall 151.
- ⁹⁹ Nuttall 156.
- ¹⁰⁰ Nuttall 159-60.
- ¹⁰¹ Nuttall 160.
- ¹⁰² Felperin, Romance 247-48.
- ¹⁰³ Hazlitt 238.
- ¹⁰⁴ Daniells 28.
- ¹⁰⁵ Van Doren 281.
- ¹⁰⁶ Qtd. Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 532.
- ¹⁰⁷ Orgel 12.
- ¹⁰⁸ Orgel 12.
- ¹⁰⁹ Leininger 213.
- ¹¹⁰ Orgel 53.
- ¹¹¹ Orgel 13.

- ¹⁰² Orgel 13-14.
- ¹⁰³ Orgel 14.
- ¹⁰⁴ Skura 58.
- ¹⁰⁵ Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 533.
- ¹⁰⁶ Qtd. Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 533.
- ¹⁰⁷ Qtd. Russel Brown 533.
- ¹⁰⁸ Anne Barton, The Tempest 17.
- ¹⁰⁹ Nuttall 77.
- ¹¹⁰ Nuttall 159.
- ¹¹¹ Nuttall 157.
- ¹¹² Coghill 160.
- ¹¹³ Walter 73.
- ¹¹⁴ Felperin, Romance 248.
- ¹¹⁵ Felperin, Romance 250.
- ¹¹⁶ Karol Berger 212.
- ¹¹⁷ Orgel 20.
- ¹¹⁸ Yates 95.
- ¹¹⁹ Kermode, Tmp. xlvii.
- ¹²⁰ Agrippa, qtd. Kermode, Tmp. xlvii-xlviii.
- ¹²¹ Walter 62.
- ¹²² Karol Berger 213.
- ¹²³ Riemer 126.
- ¹²⁴ Walter 62.
- ¹²⁵ Riemer 113.
- ¹²⁶ Qtd. Fenwick 17.
- ¹²⁷ See Hill, 98.
- ¹²⁸ See Augustine, On the Trinity Bk. X.
- ¹²⁹ Peterson 225.
- ¹³⁰ Knight, Crown 206.
- ¹³¹ Karol Berger 220.
- ¹³² Qtd. Karol Berger 220.
- ¹³³ Qtd. Grant 8.
- ¹³⁴ Grant 8.
- ¹³⁵ Grant 7.
- ¹³⁶ Barnet 225.
- ¹³⁷ Barnet 225.
- ¹³⁸ Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 534.
- ¹³⁹ Grant 10.
- ¹⁴⁰ Grant 10.
- ¹⁴¹ Grant 5.
- ¹⁴² Black, "Latter End" 29.
- ¹⁴³ Grant 11-12.
- ¹⁴⁴ Grant 15.
- ¹⁴⁵ Grant 15.
- ¹⁴⁶ Grant 13.
- ¹⁴⁷ Qtd. Grant 11.
- ¹⁴⁸ Grant 11.
- ¹⁴⁹ Leininger 209.
- ¹⁵⁰ Black, "The Latter End" 29.
- ¹⁵¹ Leininger 211.
- ¹⁵² Leininger 214.
- ¹⁵³ Leininger 214.

- ¹⁵⁴ Grant 13.
- ¹⁵⁵ Orgel 47.
- ¹⁵⁶ Qtd. in Orgel 47.
- ¹⁵⁷ Riemer 130.
- ¹⁵⁸ Bate 260.
- ¹⁵⁹ Shakespeare may indeed have consulted the Geneva Bible margins. See Hamlet 5.2. 155, and Black, "Edified".
- ¹⁶⁰ Kermode 143.
- ¹⁶¹ Orgel 40.
- ¹⁶² Kermode 143.
- ¹⁶³ Kermode 85.
- ¹⁶⁴ Bate 245.
- ¹⁶⁵ Sidney 165.
- ¹⁶⁶ Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 581.
- ¹⁶⁷ Barnet, "Temp. on the Stage" 223-24.
- ¹⁶⁸ Russell Brown, The Tempest 54.
- ¹⁶⁹ Kermode, Temp. lxxv.
- ¹⁷⁰ Barker and Hulme 202.
- ¹⁷¹ Peterson 241.
- ¹⁷² Schmidt 988.
- ¹⁷³ Schmidt 988.
- ¹⁷⁴ Walter 70.
- ¹⁷⁵ Black, "The Latter End" 38.
- ¹⁷⁶ Black, "The Latter End" 38.
- ¹⁷⁷ Felperin, Romance 284.
- ¹⁷⁸ Bate 252.
- ¹⁷⁹ Bate 251-52.
- ¹⁸⁰ Black, "The Latter End" 38.
- ¹⁸¹ Dobrée 49.
- ¹⁸² Dobrée 49.
- ¹⁸³ Black, "The Latter End" 39.
- ¹⁸⁴ Black, "The Latter End" 40.
- ¹⁸⁵ Dover Wilson 19.
- ¹⁸⁶ Loughery and Taylor 114.
- ¹⁸⁷ Dover Wilson 19.
- ¹⁸⁸ Black, "The Latter End" 41.
- ¹⁸⁹ Young 191.
- ¹⁹⁰ Young 190.
- ¹⁹¹ Nuttall 2.
- ¹⁹² Barker and Hulme 203-04.
- ¹⁹³ Orgel 23.
- ¹⁹⁴ Barker and Hulme 203-04.
- ¹⁹⁵ Harry Berger 255.
- ¹⁹⁶ Dover Wilson 17.
- ¹⁹⁷ Dover Wilson 17; See Shelley 503.
- ¹⁹⁸ Russell Brown, Shakespeare in Performance 540.
- ¹⁹⁹ Harry Berger 278.
- ²⁰⁰ Brown, The Tempest 59.
- ²⁰¹ Black, "Edified" 18; The lines paraphrased are "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors" (Matt.6:12).
- ²⁰² Felperin, Romance 278.
- ²⁰³ Peterson 248-49.
- ²⁰⁴ Walter 73.
- ²⁰⁵ Walter 73.

²⁰⁶ Walter 73.

²⁰⁷ Snyder 29.

²⁰⁸ Snyder 37.

²⁰⁹ Snyder 37.

²¹⁰ Vaughn and Vaughn 116.

Conclusion: To See the Life Beyond a Common Joy

E.K. Chambers bluntly claims that when one studies the development of the Shakespearean canon, one observes that

the transition from the tragedies to the romances is not an evolution but a revolution. There has been some mental process such as the psychology of religion would call a conversion. Obviously the philosophy of the tragedies is not a Christian philosophy, and in a sense that of the romances is.¹

For those who accept the Enlightenment's strict separation of fact and value, and Frye's view of literature as a self-contained universe, a Christian interpretation of Shakespeare's romances--such as the one offered by Chambers or by this dissertation--will not be accepted as knowledge, but rather as the confounding of an external value system with the meaning of unique literary works. Chambers forgets, such critics would argue, that Shakespeare's romances are dramatic plays, not philosophical treatises. To some degree, these critics do answer Philip Edwards' call for "a critical language capable of interpreting" the romances,² and they valuably remind us that each romance mediates meaning in unique ways appropriate to the dramatic arts. Certainly, appreciating the diverse, delightful artistic techniques of Shakespeare's romances requires aesthetic conversion, particularly a capacity for relaxed wonder at the miraculous *mimesis* portrayed by each play. However, Edwards' suggestion that critics should "for the moment ignore the illumination"³ offered within each play cannot be sustained even during the performance of a single romance, for each play's artistic structures themselves point to how "the Light of the world" (John 9:5) illuminates the meaning of the onstage action. When criticism attempts to describe the wisdom this meaning offers, it is not illegitimate to consider Shakespeare, as Coleridge often does, as "not only a great Poet but a great Philosopher."⁴

The centrality of Christianity to the description of this wisdom will also be questioned by the second group of critics likely to reject Chambers' view, those who accept the Nietzschean position that interpretations tell us more about the interpreter's own values than about reality itself. For such critics, my dissertation might be dismissed as the biased view of one who has looked at the romances and seen "evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 1: 11)⁵ except by his own Christian faith. For an interpreter of my horizons, the romances are a difficult hermeneutic example by which to illustrate the Lonerganian view that criticism ought to look for, and is capable of seeing,

not merely what one wishes but what is so. Yet bias is as much a problem for those whose horizons fail to see what is in a literary work as it is for those who "seem to see the things [they do] not" (*Lr.* 4.6.172).

The time may be ripe for a sympathetic reading of Shakespeare's romances, for they are a particularly important example of literature whose Christian significance has been obscured rather than illuminated by recent criticism. R.M. Frye contrasts Shakespeare's plays with the "inescapable evidences" of Christian meaning in the poems of writers such as Dante, Spenser, and Milton, then confidently and influentially concludes, "Nothing of the kind can justifiably be said of Shakespeare."⁶ Certainly, the romances' religious meaning escapes the interpretations of some critics; but, might this be because Shakespeare, as a dramatist writing barely a generation after the mystery plays were banned in England, prefers (for a wide variety of possible reasons) to mediate Christian meaning through less explicit artistic means than Spenser or Milton? Answering this question requires dialectical comparison of evidence, but many critics ignore rather than argue against the evidence of Christian meaning in Shakespeare's romances. R.M. Frye, for example, focuses primarily upon Shakespeare's tragedies and reaches his conclusion without discussing the vast majority of this dissertation's long and widely available evidence in favor of a Christian interpretation of the romances.⁷ Each element of religious meaning in the romances must be examined to determine its possible meanings, and certainly the evidence offered in this dissertation is nothing more than a contribution to this future debate. Nevertheless, it may redress an imbalance against Christian readings of the romances, and while it is true that in literary criticism we "know in part" (1 Cor. 13: 12), to avoid misinterpreting and devaluing literature we must also affirm that part of what we know.

The interpretative debate about Shakespeare's romances is complex, but its difficulty should not forever delay an explicit consideration of the value that these plays might have if their meaning is primarily Christian. Dowden attempts this kind of consideration by concluding with the question, "What shall be said of Shakspeare's radiation through art of the ultimate truths of conscience and conduct?"⁸ Dowden's answer, however, reflects the vacuity of nineteenth-century Arnoldian Christianity:

Shakspeare does not supply us with a doctrine, with an interpretation, with a revelation.

What he brings to us, is this--to each one, courage, and energy, and strength, to

dedicate himself and his work to that,--whatever it be,--which life has revealed to him as best, and highest, and most real.⁹

An orthodox Christian evaluation of Shakespeare's romances must be a good deal clearer, and yet also evoke the mystery that is revealed by these plays. Given the romances' emphasis on resurrection, it must be immediately admitted that they would have to be devalued if Christianity is not historically true; as St. Paul honestly admits, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised ... and your believing it is useless" (1 Cor. 15:13-14).¹⁰ Many critics honestly devalue the romances precisely because they are convinced that "life is inescapably tragic."¹¹ However, even if Christianity is historically true, the value of Shakespeare's romances is not immediately obvious. From a Christian perspective, the value of art itself must also be justified. Jacques Maritain rightly warns that "it is a deadly error to expect poetry to provide the supersubstantial nourishment of men,"¹² and surely C.S. Lewis is also correct, given the promise of eternal redemption (cf. 2 Cor. 2: 15), that "the Christian knows from the outset that the salvation of a single soul is more important than the production and preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world."¹³ Yet if literature can refer one towards, rather than replace, sacramental life, then it may yet be of valuable service within a religious culture.

The particular nature of that service has usually been described, even by most of the Christian critics cited in this dissertation, as a vision of the crucial experiences in every Christian's life: the painful suffering caused by sin, the steps necessary for repentance, and some suggestion of the redemptive hope offered by resurrection; in short, the fundamentals of the Christian Gospel that are so succinctly summarised in 1 Cor. 15, the Pauline letter to which Shakespeare's romances often allude. Certainly each romance mediates these meanings; but, to limit their value to messages that might also be conveyed by far simpler writings is to miss crucial elements of the romances' religious value. Nor is it true that these plays systematically teach Christian doctrine in an explicit scholastic manner. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's romances--in addition to their playful, imaginative portrayal of human life--do offer an authentic *mimesis* of the nature and redemptive activity of the Christian God; thus, they are also a valuable form of "sacred" art:

Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God--the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who 'reflects the glory of

God and bears the very stamp of his nature' ... Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer and to the love of God, Creator and Saviour, the Holy One and Sanctifier.¹⁴

Likening Shakespearean drama to sacred art may sound bardolatrous or incongruous, perhaps primarily because of the often comic tone of the romances, a tone which any serious interpretation of these plays tends to underplay. Religious Renaissance literature, such as in the work of Spenser, Donne, Herbert, or Milton, usually has a serious tone. Yet Shakespeare's romances return to older artistic modes; works such as Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, The Second Shepherd's Play, Erasmus' The Praise of Folly, or Sidney's Arcadia provide Christian models for blending comic and sacred art. The portrayal of Christian Deity in Shakespeare's romances is not explicit in the manner of medieval writers, but it is an informing vision; if a Christian mediation of meaning is essential to the romances' interpretation, as this dissertation has attempted to show, then these plays' comic elements need not detract from their theological value.

Because God is infinite, finite human attempts to represent Him always have limitations but, since God created humanity "in his image" (Gen. 1: 27), usually also have strengths. The limitation of the mode of "sacred" art offered by Shakespeare's romances is suggested by the history of their critical reception; like Christ's parables, their mediation of meaning may be evaded by those who refuse to regard the dramatic events and images as invaluable "good truth" (WT 2.1. 200) about the human condition, and the Divine offer to that condition (cf. Matt. 13: 9-15). Not that the romances' have the same seriousness or authority as Christ's gospel, but to explain their manner of teaching, and much of the truth they teach, it is invaluable to know what Paulina seems to have learned from St. Paul: to see things of the highest value, "It is requir'd / [We] do awake [our] faith" (WT 5.3. 94-95). Thus the limitation of Shakespeare's romances is also their great strength, for their evocation of Deity mimetically represents the "spiritual revolution" (Eph. 4: 24)¹⁵ that religious conversion entails, and yet also the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4: 7) and thus cannot be adequately represented. These plays do not explicitly demand that we believe in anything beyond the standard theatrical call to "entertain the offer'd fallacy" (Err. 2.2.186); but, if we accept their invitation to believe in the spiritual life mimetically portrayed, then we begin to understand some vital aspects of Christ's gospel.

Shakespeare's romances may thus be texts which again call one to the ancient Christian road to knowledge, "*crede ut intelligas*" ("Believe in order that you may understand").¹⁶ As sacred

art, they evoke faith; not blind faith, but rather Christian faith, which is both “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1),¹⁷ and “the knowledge born of religious love”¹⁸ (Cf. Rom. 5: 5). Shakespeare evokes this faith through the representation of human characters whose “sorrow [was] turned into joy” (John 16:20) so that they can “rejoice / Beyond a common joy” (*Tmp.* 5.1.207); indeed, they “rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious” (1 Pet. 1: 8). Even more analogously to the Christian gospel, which teaches that “in [Christ] was life” (John 1: 4) and that whoever believes in Christ “is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24), so the joy of the characters in Shakespeare’s romances occurs because, in a metaphorical yet mimetically Christian sense, “Dear Life redeems” them from the “numbness” of “death” (*WT* 5.3. 101-02). Attempting to see this “mystery” (1 Cor. 15: 51)¹⁹ “through a glass” progressively clearer (1 Cor. 13: 12), and to learn a language capable of conveying “a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of” (*WT* 5.2.42-43), is the unending joy of critics of Shakespeare’s romances, especially those who rejoice in the Life who, these plays remind us, yet lives.

Conclusion: Endnotes

¹ Chambers, William, 86.

² Edwards, "Romances" 18.

³ Edwards, "Romances" 18.

⁴ Coleridge, Lectures 487.

⁵ King James Version.

⁶ R.M. Frye, Christian 267.

⁷ For example, R.M. Frye does not even mention that there *is* a theophany in Cymbeline; given that his book is a broad study of all of Shakespeare's plays, this omission evidences a remarkably determined bias against seeing any Christian references in Shakespeare's plays.

⁸ Dowden 429.

⁹ Dowden 430.

¹⁰ Jerusalem Bible version.

¹¹ Muir, Last 60. Also, see Daniell 60.

¹² Maritain, qtd. Booth 1.

¹³ Lewis, Reflections 10.

¹⁴ Catechism, 505.

¹⁵ Jerusalem Bible version.

¹⁶ Qtd. Lonergan, Method 336. Both Lonergan and Hill (1-9) note the vital importance of this dictum in Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Anselm.

¹⁷ King James version.

¹⁸ Lonergan, Method 115.

¹⁹ King James version.

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