

**Action Bodies / Acting Bodies:
Performing Corpo-Realities in Shakespeare's Late Romances**

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Zusammenfassung

Ausgangspunkt dieser Arbeit ist die Annahme, dass das Spätwerk Shakespeares sich durchgängig und intensiv damit auseinandersetzt, „was es heißt zu wissen, dass andere, dass wir Körper haben“ (Stanley Cavell). Untersucht wird die Bedeutung, die ein solcher *corporeal turn* für die Rezeption von drei der von der Shakespeare-Forschung bisher eher vernachlässigten Romanzen hat: *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* und *Cymbeline*. Das Augenmerk der Analyse richtet sich hierbei insbesondere auf die Art und Weise, in der sich Repräsentationen des handelnden Körpers im doppelten Sinne (action body/acting body) zur dichten textuellen und theatralischen Selbstreflexion der Stücke verhalten. Hierbei rekurriert die Analyse auf kritische Ansätze, die sich aus der neueren kulturwissenschaftlichen Diskurswende in Bezug auf Körper und Performanz ergeben.

Shakespeare, Körper, Performanz

Abstract

Proceeding from the premise that in his late plays Shakespeare continuously engages with the question of “what it is to know that others, that we, have bodies” (Stanley Cavell), this thesis examines the significance of such a ‘corporeal turn’ for the dramatic analysis of three of Shakespeare’s late romances: *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*. Following in the wake of critical approaches that have emerged from a new focus of interest in the body and performance, this thesis supplements a reading of the playtext with a reading of the text in performance to illustrate how representations of the performing body are bound up with and shaped by the plays’ intense textual and theatrical self-reflection. It argues that these plays’ penchant for bodily and textual resurrections goes hand in hand with a Jacobean predilection for romance, something that enabled playwrights like Shakespeare to challenge the limitations of prevailing classical orthodoxies defining the dramatic body in the dramatic space.

Shakespeare, Body, Performance

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1 Introduction

Language and materiality are fully embedded in each other, chiasmic in their interdependency, but never fully collapsed into one another, i.e., reduced to one another, and yet neither fully ever exceeds the other. Always already implicated in each other, always already exceeding one another, language and materiality are never fully identical nor fully different. (Butler, *Bodies* 69)

How do human bodies make sense? This was the question that troubled me whenever confronted with dramatic texts, texts that unlike any other literary genre depend on the presence of physical bodies. The subject of this thesis evolved from a wish to investigate this ‘surplus’ matter, and from the irritation I felt when grappling with critical theory in an attempt to master such a wish. Following the well-trodden path of new historicist, cultural materialist and post-structuralist thinking enabled me to see, among other things, how cultural values and norms are inscribed in bodies and how the body of the unruly ‘Other,’ the Other that departs from the male norm, is continually (p)rescribed until it is eventually literally written out of the play. What these theories did not help me get closer to, however, was corporeality, the corporeality of the performing body that – not unlike the poor player in *Macbeth* – “struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more” (5.5.25-26).¹ At the end of these literary analyses, therefore, it felt as if only disembodied corpses remained to litter my page, just as in the final *mise en scène* of a Shakespearean tragedy.

And yet, this is by no means all. Where text is exhausted, as Carol Rutter has observed, meaning does not disappear: the mere physical presence of a corpse serves an excessive and thus troubling signifier that forestalls closure – the neat masculine ending envisioned by patriarchal ideology – by raising uneasy questions.² Using a critical approach that thrived on text, and nothing but text, I had the distinct feeling that I was not doing justice to the extra-textual potential of such ‘corpo-realities’. Bodies, as Judith Butler has argued so persuasively, do matter in more than one sense.³ They are not mere semiotic sign-vehicles, nor are they merely “actor[s] on stage that are ready to take on the roles assigned to ... [them] by culture,” as social historian Thomas Laqueur would have it (61). Instead, they actively and continuously create affective meaning through their physical presence, a presence that may be at odds with any dramatic text assigned to it. And they do so most spectacularly in the late plays of

¹Quotations from Shakespeare’s works follow *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Arden Shakespeare-Thomson Learning, 2001), unless specified otherwise.

²See especially the preface and first chapter of Rutter’s *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare’s Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001) for a reading of the theatrical significance of the body-as-corpse.

³See esp. Butler’s *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Shakespeare, where the longed-for resurrection of bodies that tragedy denies is realised in the protean province of romance.

The objective of this study is therefore to investigate the significance of Shakespeare's late generic 'evolution' from a perspective that, to borrow Lynn Enterline's words, acknowledges the dramatic body both as a "bearer of meaning and linguistic agent" – as the matrix, in other words, "where representation, materiality, and action collide" and the play begins ("You" 6).

1.1 *Mise en corps*

... an act has three branches – it is to
act, to do, to perform....
(*Ham.* 5.1.11-12)

As its title suggests, this study focuses on bodies that act. The aural and visual juxtaposition of action bodies and acting bodies triggers a multitude of possible connections between those terms, a synaptic crossfire, so to speak, that I want to tap into briefly in order to outline the field of my investigation. To begin with, both *acting* and *action* visually and semantically incorporate the term *act*. The latter, in turn, not only refers to one of the main structural elements of the dramatic form, it also distinguishes the genre under discussion. Drama is essentially concerned with action. Explained etymologically, the term *drama* derives from the Greek verb *δράω*, meaning "to act, to do, to perform" ("Drama"). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the noun *acting*, on the other hand, makes its first appearance in the English language only as late as 1590, where it is used to denote the performance of a play, or parts in plays, but also to refer to the process of carrying out into action, execution (cf. "Acting").⁴ How closely knit the terms action and acting are at this period of time is also illustrated by the fact that *acting* in the sixteenth-century was originally used to describe the *action* of the orator, his art of gesture, whereas what the common stages offered was *playing*, the personation of action (cf. Gurr, *Shakespearean* 99). Beyond their complex semantic relation what unites all these terms is their implied prerequisite: the physical presence of bodies that are in motion, what I want to call 'performing bodies'. Both on the stage and in the play script performing bodies actively create meaning through corporeal eloquence, a notion that is perhaps best conveyed through the embodied intensity of 'moving tongues' or 'discoursing eyes,' somatic metaphors that so often crop up in Shakespeare's plays. In a period where "the word 'spirit' itself referred to a 'subtile and thinne body' – the vital corporeal fluid ... acting as the crucial connection

⁴ As an illustrative example for the latter meaning, the *OED* quotes Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (c. 1601): "Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma or a hideous dream" (2.1.63-65).

between body and soul,” corporeality was not a mere figure of speech (Hillman 2). Instead, as a burgeoning new materialist turn in early modern scholarship has demonstrated, the emphatically somatic nature of the early modern language serves as an indicator for the period’s resolutely materialist habits of thought in which questions of selfhood were essentially linked to questions about the physical make-up or the so-called complexion of the body.⁵ Consequently, the term *person* “carried the force of ‘the living body of a human being’” as presented to the sight of others,⁶ in the same way that *personation*, the dramatic representation of a character, was “situated in the entire body, not in the head” (Smith, “E/loco/motion” 135).⁷ Thus, in a popular collection of character sketches from 1615, the “Excellent Actor” is characterised by a “full and significant action of body . . . : sit in a full Theatre, and you will thinke you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many eares, whiles the *Actor* is the *Center*” (Overbury sig. M5v).

The theatre, to spell out the obvious, materialises the gestures and sounds, the physical language of the body. But whose body is it that does the talking? As the slash in the title of this study indicates, there are also varying degrees of non-identity to consider between acting and action bodies in drama. Most obviously, there is a discontinuity between the dramatic body that is figuratively inscribed and prescribed by the play script, and the theatrical body that is

⁵ New materialism here refers to a mode of cultural criticism that focuses on everyday physical objects or things, their properties and actions. As the name implies, new materialism in early modern studies evolved from cultural materialist criticism, a “critical practice concerned with the cultural embeddedness of aesthetic objects . . . and the inescapably political nature of all cultural production and interpretation” (Bruster 197). New materialist studies considering the early modern body include Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1996); David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, eds., *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Anne Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, eds. *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); and Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2009).

⁶ In the *OED* this definition of *person* is glossed by reference to Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (“*Person*”). The quote is from the scene in which Enobarbus describes (or, to be more precise, does not describe) Cleopatra: “For her own person, / It beggared all description” (2.2.207-08).

⁷ The renewed interest in sensory experience and cognitive embodiment within Shakespeare studies in the last decade firmly asserts a historicity of the body through changing sense perceptions. See esp. Bruce Smith’s outline of a historical phenomenological approach in his article on “Premodern Sexualities” in *PMLA* 115.3 (2000): 318–29, and the introduction to the special issue on “Shakespeare and Phenomenology,” edited by Kevin Curran and James Kearney for *Criticism*, 54.3 (2012): 353-364. Examples for cognitive approaches to embodiment in drama, focusing on the inseparability of mind, body and culture and the impact of this on our understanding of Shakespeare’s theatre include, for example, Arthur F. Kinney’s study on *Shakespeare and Cognition: Aristotle’s Legacy and Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Lowell Gallagher and Shankar Raman, eds., *Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment and Cognition* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Evelyn B. Tribble and John Sutton, “Cognitive Ecology as a Framework for Shakespearean Studies,” *Shakespeare Studies* 39 (2011): 94-103; and Laurie Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn B. Tribble, eds., *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre: The Early Modern Body-Mind* (London: Routledge-Taylor Francis, 2014).

physically incorporated, or rather, incarnated by the actor.⁸ This particularly applies to the early modern English theatre, where, as Gail Kern Paster has argued among others, dramatic convention “prescribed and accepted female impersonation by transvestite actors and hence acknowledged the indeterminate, variant relation between two ambiguous and mutable social texts – between the actor’s body, natural and social, and the specific attributes, natural and social, of his fictionalized being” (*Body* 20). Working with early modern drama thus means taking into account various orders or, to use Paster’s words, “texts” of cultural articulation. Only at their intersection will it be possible to map a body in performance as it articulates itself in print and on the stage.

These preliminary observations already raise several questions, questions that shape the historical and theoretical framework of this study. How was such *différance*⁹ perceived in early modern culture, a culture – as a burgeoning body of scholarly work on the materiality of Renaissance bodies has acknowledged – that was only just beginning to think *of* rather than *with* their bodies?¹⁰ To what extent is it reasonable at all to entertain speculations about the presence of bodies that are – in a very material sense – absent, or to say the least, unrepresentable? And, speaking from the vantage point of the literary critic, how is it possible to read or, for that matter, write about the body in early modern drama in a way that accommodates both “the crucial corporeality of the dramatic role and its ‘embodiment’ in performance” without negating “the unrepentant physicality of the performer’s being and

⁸ This “affective corporeality” that distinguishes theatre as a medium and the relation between actor’s body and the dramatic text is also brilliantly explored from a phenomenological perspective in Bert O. States’ *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985), 27.

⁹ I am here using the term as coined by Jacques Derrida in his *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972). The spelling indicates a fusion of the two senses of the French verb “différer,” to differ and to defer, with which Derrida suggests that anything expressed in speech or writing will always have more than one finite meaning (cf. “Deconstruction” 57). I found this term particularly illuminating in the context of theatre and drama, as meaning here is not only disseminated by the difference/deference between body natural of the actor and embodied role; *différance* also characterises the relationship between text and performance. As John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan remind us in their introduction to *A New History of Early English Drama* (1997): “Of all the literary forms drama is the least respectful of its author’s intentions,” registering as it does the multiple and sometimes conflicting intentions of its textual contributors which, in addition to the playwright, include “actors, annotators, revisers, collaborators, scribes, printers, proofreaders” (2). More obviously than any other writing, a play script is thus always already decentred, initiating performances of meaning even before it is staged, read or viewed (cf. Waller 27).

¹⁰ Since I began writing this study, the amount of material that has been published on the early modern body has increased exponentially. A representative sample of the trailblazing works published as part of the 1990s scholarly surge of interest in bodily matter includes David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, eds., *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1993); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995); Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

doing on the stage,” as theatre semiotician Keir Elam has recently demanded (“In what chapter” 143)?

The problem is essentially a methodological one and brings with it the complex business of identifying the theoretical assumptions that inform my quest for flesh. An analysis of the performing body effectively requires one to work in two different sign systems, the written and the performed. While the former can hardly be called stable, having been ‘amended’ by successive generations of editors, the latter’s ‘liveness’ is essentially undocumentable, that is, it cannot be reproduced and as such is resistant to theory.¹¹ In addition, the apprehension of early modern performing bodies is hampered by the difficulty of historical reconstruction since, as Susan Wiseman reminds us, “it is not possible to talk with the dead, or to fully re-animate a field of discourse in which literary language is only a part” (196). The materialisation of bodies on a stage physically lost and rooted in a cultural context that we will never fully recover can therefore only remain conjectural. Nevertheless, I would like to combine the historical evidence that may be gathered in the printed texts extant with a (necessarily selective) consideration of how ‘Shakespearean’ bodies continue to come alive not only in the theatre but also in various other media of performance (especially moving images) that mark our day and age.

A model methodological approach for such an endeavour, however, is hard to find. In literary criticism, the body is a relatively recent enthusiasm and although the ‘corporeal turn’ that has preoccupied cultural studies for the last two decades has made its impact on the Shakespeare critical industry, there have been few successful attempts to negotiate an interface between literary and theatrical reading practices.¹² Most Shakespearean scholars continue to play out the competition between a culture of print and a culture of performance associated with the turn of the seventeenth century.¹³ This is articulated implicitly in the policies of modern editions or more explicitly in the ‘page versus stage’ debate. While page-centred analyses have more or less happily embraced discourse theory where the body features

¹¹ Considering the ontology or essence of performance, performance theorist Peggy Phelan provocatively claims: “Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of presentations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance”; in Phelan’s view, therefore, performance only “becomes itself through disappearance” (146).

¹² In his recent publication on the dual identity of drama, William B. Worthen suggests that despite the particularisation of critical terms used to approach the study of drama in the last century, the “intersection of dramatic writing and dramatic performance remains elusive” (*Drama* xiii).

¹³ Lukas Erne, for example, has drawn attention to the fact that “drama of Shakespeare’s age is situated on a trajectory from a predominantly oral to a heavily literate culture,” something that is recorded in the theatrical and literary features of Shakespeare’s variant play texts (220). While primarily working to reclaim the notion that Shakespeare wrote as a *literary* dramatist, Erne calls for a critical reception that takes into account the respective specificities of both media, stage and page, for which Shakespeare originally wrote.

prominently as a densely textualised inscriptive surface or a sign of subjection (in various senses),¹⁴ stage-centred approaches have until recently ignored the call to historicise.¹⁵ Bodies here still tend to assume universal and trans-historic meanings and effects. A theoretically more flexible approach has been proposed by Elam, whose trailblazing essay for *Alternative Shakespeares* (1996) outlines what he playfully calls a “post(humorous)-semiotics” of drama (“In what chapter” 142).¹⁶ According to Elam, both the historicist and the linguistic semiotisation of the body have essentially failed to come to terms with “its sheer untidy, asyntactic, pre-semantic *bodiliness*” (143, emphasis in original). The body that is dealt with is an idealised one, one in which actor and role are collapsed into “a single, if ‘split,’ historical trope within the similitudinous chain of early modern discourses” (160). In view of these shortcomings, he proposes a new avenue of inquiry – a revised semiotics of Shakespearean drama that takes into account social history, dramatic history and stage history to create a discursive space within which “social, dramatic and theatrical perspectives intersect in the analysis of the production of meaning” (163). Through these sets of intersecting approaches a space may be opened that is not quite Shakespeare and not quite corporeal, but it may well be a space, to appropriate a phrase from performance critic Barbara Hodgdon, where the traffic between page and stage, between early and modern, body and text flows in more than one direction (cf. “Critic” 282). Instead of following the “swing of the pendulum” that, according to Robert Weimann, “replaces centuries-old privileging of the written text with a new bias in favour of performance,” or indeed, back again, with the turn to new formalism and its re-instatement of

¹⁴ Discourse theory here refers to “the complex of ideas ... that insists on the primacy of discourse, that views culture as an interweaving of texts” and strives to identify discursive networks and their ideologies (Dawson 29).

¹⁵ ‘Stage-centred’ performance criticism emerged during the 1970s as a reaction against New Criticism’s exclusively text-based understanding of drama as literature. Performance criticism is based on the premise that Shakespeare’s plays can only be fully understood through their enactment on stage. For a concise history of Shakespeare and performance studies, see Robert Shaughnessy, *The Shakespeare Effect: A History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 1-14 and Genevieve Love, “Shakespeare and Performance,” *Literature Compass* 6.3 (2009): 741-57. For a reflection on this history and an impression of the multiplicity of approaches that characterise performance studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century, see Hodgdon and Worthen’s *A Companion to Shakespeare in Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) and the collection of essays in Sarah Werner, ed., *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹⁶ A semiotic approach to theatre and drama seeks to interconnect theoretically both the sign systems of the written/dramatic text and the theatrical/performance text (gesture, staging, etc.) in order to determine how theatrical meaning is produced and communicated. It thus acknowledges an intertextual relationship between the written play and its performance: “The written text ... is determined by its very need for stage contextualization, and indicates throughout its allegiance to the physical conditions of performance, above all to the actor’s body and its ability to materialize discourse within the space of the stage.” (Elam, *Semiotics* 209). See also Marvin Rosenberg’s “Sign Theory and Shakespeare” in *Shakespeare Survey* 40 (1987): 33-40, for a critical practical approach towards a semiotic reading of Shakespeare’s plays.

literary authority,¹⁷ this study attempts to rethink the performing body as ‘of’ the text, but also always in excess of it (“Playing” 420-21).¹⁸ It is thus significant in an active sense of the term. To quote Anthony B. Dawson: physical bodies “may not *have* meaning, but they are meaningful,” they signify in action (32). It is in this sense (to give the word ‘action’ its final dramatic turn of the screw) that they have the power to move.

1.2 Form Matters: Shakespeare’s Late Romances

Shakespeare in his romances accentuates the imaginary quality of his gardens in order to contain very real toads. (Snyder 95)

So far I have circumscribed the heart of the matter - the body of dramatic texts I will be working with: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter’s Tale*. My choice of texts was motivated by several factors. First of all, these plays, which belong to the canon of Shakespeare’s so-called late or last work, exhibit bodies that flout the criteria of verisimilitude and decorum in ways that rival even the imaginative flights of twenty-first century cyberculture.¹⁹ Bodies in this dramatic realm possess a corporeality that is curiously flexible, almost grotesque in its polymorphic potential: the dead come back to life, stone becomes flesh and solid flesh dissolves into thin air; bodies become animal, try on and discard different identities and are capable of literally losing their heads. An intriguing topic of analysis, or so it would seem, for what Elam in the late 1990s identified as the “Shakespeare Corp” of criticism that had assembled around the early modern body as privileged object of enquiry (“In what chapter”

¹⁷ New Formalism here is used to refer to a critical approach that stresses the social and political implications of literary form. For a discussion of New Formalism as a critical movement in Shakespeare studies see Mark David Rasmussen’s *Renaissance Literature and its Formal Engagements* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) and Stephen Cohen, *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). For a wider reflection on the intersection with other theoretical approaches see Marjorie Levinson “What is New Formalism” in *PMLA* 122.2 (2007): 558-69; Verena Theile and Linda Tredennick, eds., *New Formalisms and Literary Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁸ This echoes Butler’s notion that “there is an ‘outside’ to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute ‘outside,’ an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse.” Instead, it is a “constitutive ‘outside,’ ... that which can only be thought – when it can – in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders” (*Bodies* 8).

¹⁹ Even though the paradigm of ‘lateness’ in which these plays are usually understood makes for a distinctive and useful taxonomy which I also adopt in this study, it is also notoriously slippery and in its ‘last’ instance, incorrect: it glosses over the fact that *Pericles*, for example, usually classified as the first of the ‘late’ or ‘last’ plays, was probably the product of a collaborative effort with a younger dramatist (with more collaborations to follow, e.g. *King Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Cardenio*). It reworks a plot already used in Shakespeare’s earliest comedies and was penned around the same time that Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus*, a play that has never been associated with Shakespeare’s late oeuvre (cf. also Gosset 54). For a study that interrogates this ‘discourse of lateness’ in relation to Shakespeare, see Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

144).²⁰ Surprisingly enough, this critical ‘body boom,’ which has extended well into the twenty-first century, has largely bypassed the set of plays posthumously grouped together as Shakespeare’s romances.²¹ Bodies that matter, it seems, have to be “split, suffering, diseased, tortured and transgressive” (Elam, “In what chapter” 144). In other words, they have to be tragic. Bodies in Shakespeare’s late romantic work, however, are rarely seen as such. While the morphic, or, as Simon Palfrey has dubbed it, “amoeboid” quality of the figures that inhabit the world of Shakespearean romance has been noted (19), this insight has only played a supporting role in the general consensus that there is more at stake in these plays, to use Kiernan Ryan’s words, “than meets the eye and the ear” (6). As a brief glimpse at any scholarly survey will confirm, the critical appreciation of Shakespeare’s late works is still riveted to the metaphysical base or bias that has been used to describe and contain the thematic and stylistic peculiarities of what S. L. Bethell in 1947 referred to as “these naive and impossible romances” in the last two centuries (qtd. in Ryan 6).²²

²⁰ Elam lists Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1993); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).

²¹ Since the 1990s, studies on the subject of Shakespeare and bodies or body-related matters have become a regular feature in Humanities publishing catalogues, a tangible shift of interest which has merited special editions or articles in journals, such as Jeffrey Masten and Wendy Wall’s special edition on *Dramas of Hybridity: Performance and the Body*, *Renaissance Studies* 29 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 2000), Leeds Barroll and Susan Zimmermann’s edition on ‘Body Work’ in *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 29 (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2001); Sean McDowell, “The View from the Interior: The New Body Scholarship in Renaissance/Early Modern Studies,” *Literature Compass* 3.4 (2006): 778-91; Jennifer Waldron, “Reading the Body,” *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, Vol. 1 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 557-581; Margaret Healey’s book review essay on “The Body in Renaissance Studies,” *Renaissance Studies* 25.5 (2011): 716-19; François-Xavier Gleyzon and Johann Gregory, “Listening to the Body . . . : Transitioning to Shakespeare and Theory (Special Issue II),” *English Studies* 94.7 (2013): 751-56. To list but a few of the more recent monographs that have appeared on the subject since the turn of this century, and which have not been mentioned before: Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004); Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (London: Routledge, 2005); David Hillman, *Shakespeare’s Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Sujata Iyengar, ed., *Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body* (New York: Routledge-Taylor Francis, 2015).

²² A recent formulation of this can be found in Robert V. Young’s humanist attack on what he identifies as a materialist oriented spectrum of postmodern theory that has ‘infested’ literary study proper. For Young, the intellectual and imaginative shortcomings of new historicist, cultural materialist and postcolonialist approaches to drama, an “odd combination of outrageous conjecture and reductive banality,” become obvious especially in readings of the romances, Shakespeare’s “most elusive and ethereal plays” that can only properly be appreciated within a formalist approach that “places them in context of classical literature or Christian Scripture” (218). For an anthology of criticism on the late plays which aims to avoid such an “exclusionist . . . assertion of critical prerogative” see the recently published anthology by Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane, eds., *Late Shakespeare, 1608-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) (5).

Bethell's exasperation merits further explication since it brings me to the second reason for choosing to concentrate on the plays under discussion: when they foreground their protean bodies to the point of undress, these plays tend at the same time to flaunt their formal irregularities in ways that disrupt conventional generic coding and classical generic norms, challenging Philip Sidney's dictum that "defectuous circumstances" (i.e. in violation of classical representational boundaries of time and space) cannot accommodate "corporal actions" (112). And they do so under the banner of romance, a generic label first attached to *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Pericles* in 1877 by Victorian critic Edward Dowden, who felt that these plays do not fit under the First Folio categorisations of tragedy, comedy or history. Although, like Shakespeare's earlier comedies, the plays under discussion mostly draw on popular romantic narratives for their sources, they also share what Dowden identified as a distinct "romantic element" that seemed to justify the creation of a new genealogical alignment (55). For Dowden, 'romance' was the only adequate label for plays that were united by romantic incident (royal children lost and found), romantic background (scenery of mountains and seas), and above all an atmosphere of "sweet serenity" incompatible with Shakespeare's more youthful comedy (56). His assessment was spurred by metrical tests conducted by the New Shakspeare [sic] Society in 1874, which suggested that these plays had been written in close chronological proximity towards the end of Shakespeare's career as playwright.²³ Even though Dowden's reading of the late plays has since been criticised for its subjectivist premise, the label has stuck and remained pervasive in subsequent readings of Shakespeare's generic 'misfits'.²⁴

In this study I also subscribe to such a grouping but, contrary to Dowden's premise, this is to foreground a different type of romantic hinterland: the plays' expressive kinship with and poetic indebtedness to the rich body of medieval and early modern prose fiction and earlier dramatic romances. Efforts by critics such as Mary E. Lamb and Valerie Wayne have been pivotal in reclaiming such an alternative genealogy for the genre of romance in early modern drama.²⁵ Their collection of essays on *Staging Early Modern Romance* (2009) serves as a salutary

²³ For an account of how the New Shakspeare Society approached this task, see F. James Furnivall, *The Succession of Shakspeare's Works and the Use of Metrical Tests in Settling it, &c.: being the introduction to Professor Gervinus's 'Commentaries on Shakspeare'* (London, 1874).

²⁴ For a concise critical history of the much debated classification of these plays as romances, see Darlene C. Greenhalgh's "Shakespeare and Romance" in *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 1-12. Russ McDonald makes the salient point that the multitude of terms which have been used to classify these plays (including, but not limited to 'romances,' 'tragicomedies,' 'late plays,' 'last plays,' and 'final plays') have managed to "survive alongside one other ... each pointing to essential features that the other does not comprise" (25).

²⁵ It is interesting to note that in tandem with the rise of New Formalism in literary studies, the critical appreciation of early modern romance, particularly of the neglected prose variety, has moved beyond a marginalised consideration within traditional source study to a pole position in the evolution

reminder that romance, a term originally used to denote fictional narrative works written in the Romance vernacular as opposed to Latin, proliferated widely in its application to encompass virtually all existing literary forms, narrative and dramatic, by the time Shakespeare wrote his plays (cf. 2). Incredibly popular in any shape or variety, romances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Louis B. Wright aptly puts it, “fell from the presses like leaves in autumn” (382). A relative latecomer to what was a “thriving, competitive and influential culture of early modern English fiction,” early commercial theatre depended on romance narratives for its plots (Mentz 4).²⁶ So much so, in fact, that the anti-theatrical polemicist Stephen Gosson in 1582 with some exasperation notes that “the Aethiopian historie, Amadis of Fraunce, the Rounde table . . . have been thoroughly ransackt to furnish the Playe houses in London” (*Plays* n. pag.). As Lamb and Wayne suggest, some of this appeal can be explained by romance’s demotic nature: “The early modern marketplaces both of print and theatre offered romances to consumers of every social status, turning back to present an older and chivalric England of the old Arthurian tales while capitalizing on the newer form of Greek romance to dignify mercantile adventures in the New World” (5). With its significant debt to and inspiration for narrative remakes, *Pericles* in particular illustrates the popular (and commercial) success such cross-generic ventures enjoyed at the time.

The humanist elite, however, was not impressed: derided as “gross absurdities” for their crude violations of the representational boundaries of space and time, these extravagant fabrications with their sprawling plots presented an obvious challenge to the classical “laws of poesy” (Sidney 113, 114). For Sidney, the English drama of his time is “faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions” (114). In his *Defense of Poetry*, Sidney highlights the deficiencies typical of such dramatic plots: “for ordinary it is that two

of (early) modern literary form. See also Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) and esp. also Cyrus Mulready’s, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) that “demonstrates the possibilities for reading form as a means to historically inflected criticism” (32). Other recent studies on early modern romances include Lori Humphrey Newcomb, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002); Nandini Das, *Renaissance Romance: The Transformation of English Prose Fiction, 1570-1620* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Janet Clare, *Shakespeare’s Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014).

²⁶ When referring to romance narratives in this context, critics generally distinguish between the Arthurian or courtly romance with its focus on “knightly quests for love and honour primarily in a Christian world” (Mowat, “Afterword” 236), such as Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* (1485), newer foreign imports, such as the Italian novella, Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*, or the Spanish *Amadis of Gaule* (early 16th century), and translations and adaptations of Greek romances such as Heliodorus’ hugely influential *Aethiopian History* (transl. 1569 and reprinted numerous times) and Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloë* (transl. 1587). The Greek romances especially introduced an array of shipwrecks, pirates, oracles, family separations and reunions, and apparent deaths into the Elizabethan English literary and theatrical scene. See also Helen Cooper’s *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) on the evolution of the English prose romance through common literary motifs.

young princes fall in love; after many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours' space: which, how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine" (115). Montaigne in his *Essays* (as translated by John Florio in 1603) has no qualms dismissing the whole corpus of medieval romance as pulp fiction – “idle time consuming, and wit besotting trash wherein youth doth commonly amuse it self” – even though, as he later concedes, “to this day [I] know not their bodies, nor what they containe” (1: 173).

In spite of such critical disapproval, romantic dramatisations continued to prove a hit with the crowds: stories of old were after all translated into dramatic immediacy “by the feat and dexterity of man’s body” (Puttenham 124). The anonymous court romance *The History Of Love and Fortune*, first performed c. 1582 at Windsor Castle, is one of the few surviving examples of such a dramatic experiment. Featuring the trials and tribulations of a princess, suggestively named Fidelity, in love with a worthy but lesser-born orphan (incidentally named Hermione) who is banished from court by her angry father, this play has been grudgingly admitted into the shortlist of *Cymbeline*’s probable romantic intertexts by traditional source studies.²⁷ Even though Nosworthy in his introduction to the Arden edition finds it hard to imagine what Shakespeare could have seen in “this ramshackle old play” (xxv), its popular appeal at the time is attested by the fact that it was reprinted at least fifteen times between 1607 and 1670, even though there are no records of subsequent stage revivals (cf. Ward 460). According to Allyn E. Ward, its very ‘ramshackleness’ is the result of the “multifarious dramatic innovations” employed to cater to popular and courtly trends (446): the distinctive use of the onstage framing device (Jupiter presiding over a squabble between Venus and Fortune), the wager motif and the innovative use of dumb shows, as well as many of the themes (including fidelity tests, unsuitable suitors, banished lords who take up magic, pastoral retreats, grand reunions) are evidently adopted and adapted not only in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* but also in his other “tapestried romances” (MacNeice 255).²⁸

Within the first decade of James I’s accession to the English throne the dramatic romance became established enough to be the subject of rich parody (cf. Mulready, *Romance* 52-53). The

²⁷ See also Nosworthy xxv-xxviii, and Bullough 8: 21-23. The earliest print edition extant was published as *The Rare Triumphes Of Love and Fortune* in 1589 (cf. Ward 446).

²⁸ Louis MacNeice uses this apt description of Shakespeare’s late romances in his poem “Autolycus” (1945). The relevant passage reads:

In his last phase when hardly bothering
To be a dramatist, the Master turned away
From his taut plots and complex characters
To tapestried romances, conjuring
With rainbow names and handfuls of sea-spray
And from them turned out happy Ever-Afters. (1-6)

comedy of *Mucedorus*, first performed around c.1598, was published in sixteen subsequent extant editions through 1668, making it the most frequently printed play prior to Restoration. Shakespeare's company revived this anonymous play (containing a newly extended bear episode) for the stage in 1610, the year in which *The Winter's Tale* (with its own notorious bear scene) is thought to have been composed.²⁹ Pushing at the boundaries between narrative and drama, dramatic romance, with its penchant for textual and bodily resuscitation, provided early modern playwrights such as Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher with the breeding ground for something new. With their firm investment in the quixotic and the corpo-real, Shakespeare's late romances, I would like to argue, ride this "crest of a generic wave and would have seemed, to their first 'hearers,' anything but late" (McMullan, "Afterword" 263).

Representations of the body are bound up with and shaped by the plays' persistent textual and theatrical self-reflection, a predilection for romance narrative that challenges the physical limitations confining the performing body in the dramatic space. In this way, and in various others, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* differ from *The Tempest*, a play Cyrus Mulready in his study on *Romance on the Early Modern Stage* (2013) refers to as "anti-romance" (145). Structurally, it is the only late play to observe the classical unities of place and time. Unlike the other plays under discussion, it also does not seem to be derived from an identifiable romantic source. Depicting a day in the life of courtly castaways who have been stranded on a Mediterranean island complete with a resident author-magician, aboriginal spirits and corporeal "monsters," Shakespeare's last single-authored play presents a challenge of its own. In addition, its seemingly fathomless adaptability to critical appropriations has already generated extensive scholarly discussion and will consequently not be part of this study.

From a formal perspective, contemporary criticism regards *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale* as generic experiments that reflect the changes of theatrical fashion at the turn of the seventeenth century (cf. Snyder, "Genres" 95). Sharing similar themes, motifs and a theatrical emphasis on spectacle, these plays – with *The Tempest* cited as their stylistic apotheosis – are treated as a discrete group which is thought to have been written in response to the popularity of masques at court, the Jacobean taste for tragic-comedy, and the availability of a new more intimate indoor acting space at the Blackfriars theatre. Plots that are episodic in structure and extended in time and place, narrator figures with choric functions that manipulate the plot and its protagonists, spectacular manifestations of divine and supernatural powers, all these are elements that serve to increase the conscious fictionality of the action, its

²⁹ The full title for the 1610 edition reads: *A most pleasant comedie of Mucedorus the Kings sonne of Valentia, and Amadine the Kinges daughter of Aragon With the merry conceites of Mouse. Amplified with new additions, as it was acted before the Kings Maiestie at White-hall on Shroue-sunday night. By his Highnes Seruantes vsually playing at the Globe. Very delectable, and full of conceited [sic] mirth.*

improbabilities and miraculous turns of events which are staged around the theme of familial break-up and reunion. (cf. Snyder “Genres” 95, cf. Ryan 5). These plays do not conform to our understanding of realistic drama, and they do not intend to do so. Instead, multiple illusionistic planes and expressionistic forms increasingly blur distinctions between stage and world, role and actor, art and nature, illusion and reality. In what remains one of the most instructive structuralist accounts of Shakespeare’s late romances, Barbara Mowat argues that what Shakespeare does in effect create is a new kind of Shakespearean drama (cf. *Dramaturgy*, 93): blending tragic and comic views, a presentational with a representational style it is a “drama in which cause-and-effect patterns are broken, generic conventions abandoned ... and the dramatic illusion repeatedly broken through narrative illusion, spectacle, and other sudden disturbances of the aesthetic distance” (*Dramaturgy* 99).

Such copiousness eludes any attempts to successfully pinpoint a generic, stylistic or even a chronological ideology, something that may in part explain why these plays, apart from their initial success in early modern theatres, have only infrequently been staged since (with the exception of *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*). It may also in part explain why there has been comparatively little criticism on these plays (with the exception of *The Tempest*): their remarkable elusiveness has puzzled generations of critics trying to describe and contain both their portentous chronological position and their stylistic ‘inadequacy’ by evaluating them either as emotional autobiographies, “the freaks of a wearied imagination” (Knight 9), or by reifying them as allegorical “scripts, whose decipherment discloses a timeless Christian, pagan or humanist tale of atonement and redemption” (Ryan 6). When G. Wilson Knight in 1929 argued that *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Pericles* express “a state of mind or soul in the writer directly in knowledge ... of a mystic and transcendent fact as to the true nature and purpose of the sufferings of humanity,” he paved the way for what was to become an all but axiomatic truth in Shakespeare criticism (22). The elusiveness of these plays is directly related to their transcendental significance. After all, these were the plays written by the most mystical of bodies, William Shakespeare, at the peak of his career as principal playwright for the King’s Men. Accordingly, generations of critics devoted themselves to the formidable task of deciphering the master(?s) text only to find in it a faithful reflection of their own preconceptions, be they Christian, genetic, psychoanalytic, historical or poststructuralist. As Ryan puts it: “we have not left the realm of ulterior allegory so dear to Knight and Frye at all, but merely swapped one myth for another” (13).

Instead of pursuing the heart of the mystery in the realms of the metaphysical, the purpose of this thesis is to put the *meta* aside for a moment to consider the question of *matter*. After all, these plays, whether classified as tragedies, comedies, romances, tragicomedies, or late plays, are

unique in the Shakespeare canon for making the immaterial become material before our very eyes (and ears). Proceeding from the premise that in his late romances Shakespeare continuously engages with the question – to use Stanley Cavell’s words – of “what it is to know that others, that we, have bodies,” this study examines the significance of such a ‘corporeal turn’ (176). While in Shakespeare’s tragedies an insight into what it means to be (hu)man is only achieved at the cost of a rising number of corpses, his late romances seem to offer a more viable alternative: in the protean world of romance the recovery of the living body becomes crucial for the generation of ‘restorative’ knowledge.

In what follows, therefore, I shall concentrate not so much on what *it is not* but on what *it is* that meets the eye and the ear when we read, listen to or see these plays performed. Putting the cart before the horse, the material before the meta, I hope to dislocate the transcendental impasse by looking ‘awry’ at the plays in question.³⁰ Before I embark on this wayward journey, a note of caution ought to be given. My objective here is not to present a solution to the problem of generic categorisation that has riddled scholarship on Shakespeare’s late plays; nor is it to deny that these plays represent, as Ryan has argued, “a frontal assault on what counts as reality and the tyranny of realism itself” (15). It is to assert, however, that material reality remains the touchstone against which such ‘visionary’ display is tested.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, chronologically the first and most controversially discussed member of Shakespeare’s romantic corpus, will also open the analytic part of this study. Haunted by troubled genealogies both in form and content, what sets this play apart is its overt concern with bodily and textual ‘restorations.’ Focussing on the play’s investment in narrative, recovery and recognition in relation to the bodies that perform them, this section takes as its starting point the conspicuously ‘mouldy’ body of the play’s most striking figure – the poet-presenter Gower. It is his corporeal conception, as I will try to show, that provides a key to understanding the innovative nature of a play that still tends to be dismissed as dramatic freak, as misshapen experiment in a new genre, or as blueprint for better plays to come.

The theme of ‘illegitimate issue’ looms large in *The Winter’s Tale* where, as its title suggests, fantastical imaginings threaten to render the living and specifically female body inanimate. Perhaps the most emphatically phenomenological of all the late romances, *The Winter’s Tale* stages the recognition that knowing-through-language has a fraught, potentially tragic

³⁰ Looking awry here alludes to a quotation from Shakespeare’s *Richard II* which introduces the concept of eccentric viewing, the effect of anamorphosis:

For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects –
Like perspectives, which, rightly gazed upon,
Show nothing but confusion; eyed awry,
Distinguish form.... (2.2.16-20)

relationship to knowing-through-the-body. In a series of sensual and epistemological negotiations that take place at the frontiers of verisimilitude, rhetoric and decorum, the 'sad tale of winter' is spectacularly adjusted to a new dramatic metabolism which favours marvel over marble. Statues become flesh and narrative myth is brought to theatrical life in a carefully staged tragi-comic dramaturgy of passion that affirms the restorative pleasures of being corporeal.

Especially on stage, human bodies are dressed bodies. Material (mis)readings are taken to a whole new level in *Cymbeline*, a play notoriously intent to "lay bare and laugh at its own artifice" (Palfrey and Stern 274). Here it is clothes, the body's body, and other bodily accessories which become key players in a sartorial metatheatre that seems to insist that there is no such thing as naked truth – only shifting outfits. Taking up the question that is raised by the editors of *Subject and Object in the Renaissance Culture* – "What happens ... once the object is brought into view? What new configurations will emerge when subject and object are kept in relation?" – I argue that the bodies that materialise in this play are – in a more overt sense than in the previous plays discussed – textured (Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass 2). As vested sign that requires reading, the 'body beneath' appears insufficient as stable point of reference; instead it appears to be defined and animated by the material it inhabits. In a more radical sense than in other plays, therefore, the meaning of material objects and by inference, the subject, seem (quite literally) up for grabs.

To supplement a reading of the playtext with a reading of the text in performance means, in Rutter's words, "reimagining the canon, opening its supplementary physical, gestural, iconic texts.... It also means writing about it in a body-conscious language attentive to feeling, to the itch and pleasures of desire, and to pain" (xv). In the following chapters, I want to attempt to do just that: to examine how such a reading constructs and accommodates the body of Shakespearean late romance as it oscillates between "physical immediacy, performative action and the fictitiousness of drama," between action and acting (Kiernan 4).

2 “There may be matter in it” – *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

Following Ruth Nevo’s observation that “One cannot do better than to begin at the beginning, for this is a play that begins with a bang” (“Perils” 65), I want to start my analysis with what critics have generally isolated as the ‘queer scenes’ of a Jacobean bestseller that has subsequently been dismissed as a “misbegotten textual creation” (Newcomb, “Sources” 23). Neither comic nor tragic, the play that was first entered in the Stationer’s Register on 20 May 1608 presents its audience with the picaresque adventures of a new type of hero quite unlike the viscerally tragic overreacher Caius Martius Coriolanus, *Pericles*’ immediate predecessor.³¹ All at sea, literally and metaphorically, *Pericles* is a disaster-prone romantic protagonist who does not seem to know how to direct himself. Consciously archaic, *Pericles* uses the narrative technique of medieval romance – a monitoring Chorus and illustrative dumb shows – to steer its hero through a sprawling plot typical of Greek romance; covering misfortune, trial, exile and return across six kingdoms and spanning two generations (cf. Jordan, *Shakespeare’s* 35). In many ways, therefore, the right kind of play for a royal patron whose own wedding was famously affected (or rather, effected) by a tempestuous affair: when violent storms prevented King James I’s newly wedded wife, Anne of Denmark, from joining her husband in Scotland, the king set sail to claim his bride, committing himself, as William Ashby wrote to Queen Elizabeth on 23 October 1598, “Leanderlike to the waves of the ocean, and all for his beloved Eroes sake” (qtd. in Bergeron 51).

Despite the fact that *Pericles* is rarely put on stage today, it seems to have been an extremely successful play during Shakespeare’s lifetime. It appeared in print in 1609 as *The Late, And much admired Play, called Pericles, Prince of Tyre.... As it hath been divers and sundry times acted by his maiesties Servants, at the Globe on the Banck-side*” (cf. Bullough 6: 349). In the prologue to the printed edition of his comedy *The Hogge Hath Lost Its Pearle* (c. 1613), Robert Tailor cites *Pericles* as a marker of success, suggesting that if his play “prove so happy as to please / Weele say tis fortunate like Pericles” (sig. A3v). Most critics are agreed that *Pericles* in many ways reflects contemporary theatrical trends: based on popular medieval and Elizabethan rewritings of the ancient Greek legend of *Apollonius of Tyre*, *Pericles* falls between successful revivals of chivalric romances such as *Mucedorus* (published in 1598 and revised in 1610) and parodies of the genre, such as Francis Beaumont’s *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (first performed c. 1606). The disenchanted realism of the brothel scenes makes a nod to the up-and-coming city comedies of Jonson, Dekker and Middleton, while the play’s masque-like elements seem to cater to a

³¹ *Coriolanus* was probably written shortly before or at the same time as *Pericles* and is usually dated around 1607-1608.

demand for the increasingly elaborate theatrical spectacles offered by the newly fashionable Jacobean court masques (cf. Manley 432-34).

Apart from being popular fare (the First Quarto edition was reprinted six times by 1635), there is some evidence to suggest that in the early seventeenth century the play was repeatedly chosen for the courtly entertainment of visiting dignitaries.³² *Pericles* was also the first Shakespeare play to be performed after the Restoration at the Cockpit Theatre in 1660; a glorious moment that was, however, superseded by more than two hundred years of absence from the stage. Today, *Pericles* has the dubious distinction of being “perhaps the most successful fake in history” (Wilson, n. pag.). It is the only play of the Shakespeare canon that was omitted from the First Folio – it was first added in a supplement to the Third Folio edition in 1664 – but it is also the only play that made it into print before Shakespeare’s death in 1616. The earliest copy extant, the First Quarto of 1609, is infamous for its maimed textual corpus. Reviewing recent editions of the play for the *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Lee Bliss comes to the conclusion that “Editing *Pericles* probably constitutes punishment for sins committed in a prior life” (354). The fact that it is marked by all sorts of verbal errors and inconsistencies in style and the striking change of poetry at the beginning of the third act has generally encouraged scholars to pursue the theory of dual or mixed authorship, with playwright and inn-keeper George Wilkins heading the list of most likely collaborators.³³ Lori Humphrey Newcomb notes how in Shakespearean source study “the textual and intertextual descent of *Pericles* attracts charges of illegitimacy, misbegetting, and even incest,” presenting the scholar with “an unusually vexed case of asynchronous collaboration, of texts gone plural, of begetters begotten,” something quite apt for “a story that begins in, and never quite escapes the threat of, incest” (“Sources” 24, 26).³⁴

³² See also Suzanne Gossett’s introduction for her Arden edition of *Pericles* for further evidence of the play’s popularity (cf. esp. 2-4).

³³ In the same year that *Pericles* was entered in the Stationer’s Register, Wilkins published a prose version of the play, entitled *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre Being the True History of the Play of Pericles, as Presented By J. Gower*. This predates the First Quarto published a year later. Considering the play’s concern with prostitution, it is perhaps interesting to note that Wilkins changed profession in 1610, when he set up as innkeeper and pimp in the disreputable district of St Sepulchre in London (cf. Parr, n. pag.).

³⁴ For a meticulous study on the problems of authorship in this play see MacDonald P. Jackson’s study on *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles’ as Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), and Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2002). For a recent argument in favour of the one-author theory see the introductory comments of Doreen DelVecchio and Antony Hammond in their New Cambridge edition of *Pericles* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998). For the purposes of this study I endorse Roger Warren’s position who, in his ‘reconstructed text’ edition of the play, remarks that “If *Pericles* is a collaboration, the collaborators took some trouble to bind the various parts together” (38). For easier reference, I will assume the existence of one author and when it becomes necessary to name him, I will call him Shakespeare.

The changing fortunes of *Pericles* in critical and stage history have been closely linked not only to the long-standing controversies surrounding the play's presumptive claim to authenticity, but also by what was seen as its presumptuous treatment of incest. Whereas Richard A. McCabe in his comprehensive study of *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law, 1550-1700* (1993) singles out *Pericles* as "the most forthright contribution to the drama of father-daughter incest since the medieval *Dux Moraud'*" (180), editor Henry Tyrell, back in 1860, finds the opening scene too disturbing to be discussed:

Incest is a crime not to be recorded by the poet; it is as it were an unhallowed and unlawful subject; our literature should not be associated with all offence so repugnant to humanity. Let the dramatist and novelist treat it with disgust and silence; the sooner the recollection of it sinks in the dusty stream of oblivion the better. (qtd. in Skeele 18)

Similarly, Samuel Phelps's production of the play at Sadler's Wells in 1854 – the only main-stage performance of the play in the nineteenth century – cut all references to incest, the brothel scenes and the choric figure of Gower, and invested heavily in spectacular scenography instead (cf. Gossett 88-89). Although subsequent producers and critics of *Pericles* equally felt the need to gloss over what theatre director Nugent Monck referred to as "pointless story of incest" well into the twentieth century – the first production at Stratford-upon-Avon to include the first act was staged in 1958 – the play returned with a vengeance to puzzle post war literary critics who attempted to fit *Pericles'* inconsistencies into a coherent symbolic scheme (qtd. in Skeele 19). The most elaborate effort to subsume the marginal into the central was undertaken by Knight in his seminal book on Shakespeare's late plays, *The Crown of Life* (1947). For Knight, the opening scenes live a kind of parasitic existence in the play: referring to Lascelles Abercrombie's *Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting* (1930), he justifies his analysis of scenes whose authorship (and thus authenticity) he believes to be questionable by using metaphors of bodily transplantation. In Knight's words, "non-authentic material can assume authenticity through incorporation, deriving sustenance from the new organism into which it has been incorporated, as when flesh is grafted on a living body" (33). As I intend to show in my own reading of the play, Knight's corporeal conceit unwittingly corresponds to the body imagery that 'encarnalises' *Pericles* not only on a symbolic but also on a material level, and it does so most emphatically through Gower, the play's narrator and principle source.

2.1 Grafting Flesh

The story you are about to see has been told before. A lot.
And now we are going to tell it again. But different.
(*Gnomo and Juliet*)

From ashes ancient Gower is come,
Assuming man's infirmities,
To glad your ears, and please your eyes.
(*Per.* 1.Chorus.2-4)³⁵

Gower's opening speech is as arresting as his appearance. Both herald an acute disruption of the normal, the expected. Dressed – as Wilkins's contemporary woodcut suggests – in an antiquated short coat, wooden shoes and square cap and equipped with a staff and a branch of laurel that mark him as poet, the actor playing Gower would have entered the stage much in the same way that a medieval actor entered the playing space: by announcing himself in his role.³⁶ Even before he identifies himself, the stylistic eccentricity of Gower's octosyllabic lines

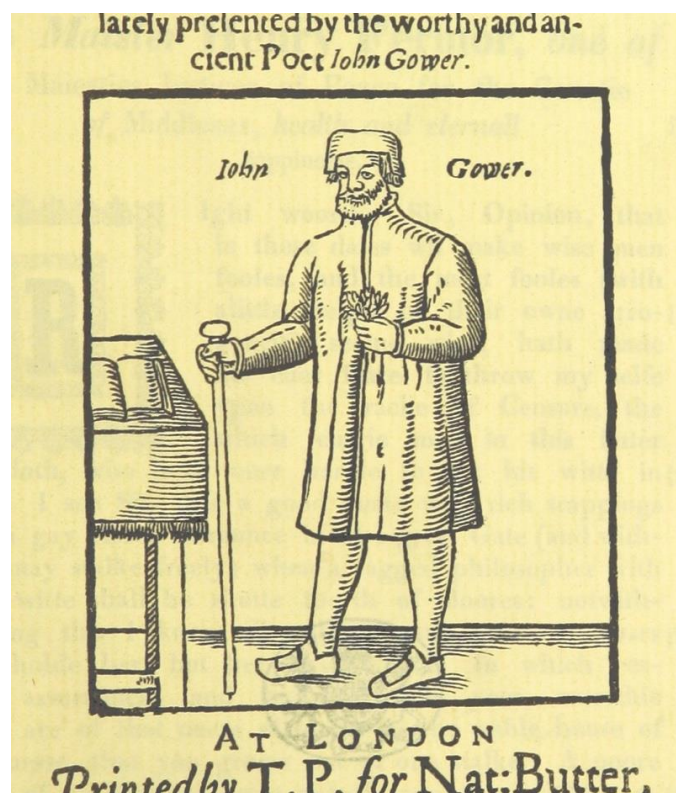


Fig. 1. John Gower, excerpt of title-page from George Wilkins, *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre . . .* (London, 1608), rpt. in Wilkins, *Pericles* 53.

³⁵ Quotations from *Pericles* follow the Arden Shakespeare edition edited by F. D. Hoeniger (London: Arden Shakespeare-Thomson Learning, 2000) unless stated otherwise.

³⁶ The woodcut vignette of Gower as poet/narrator can be found on the title page of George Wilkins's 1608 prose novella of the play, entitled *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre Being the true History of the Play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient Poet Iohn Gower.*

mark him as a figure that has come from a different, more ancient era, and as if this linguistic deviance was not in itself startling enough, it would have been surpassed by a visual show-stopper: the phoenix-like resurrection of someone whose tomb was (and still is) on display at St. Saviour's (now Southwark Cathedral) just around the corner from the Globe must have created quite a stir in the contemporary audience, for they are being asked to believe that the well-known medieval poet John Gower is restored to these "latter times" to re-story an archaic tale that has been "read ... for restoratives" (1.Chorus.11, 8).

The tale referred to is the legend of *Apollonius of Tyre*, a popular fable of incestuous lust that can be traced back to the fifth century AD. Several retellings of the *Historia Apollonii* exist in European literature. Shakespeare had previously used story elements of the tale as a narrative frame for *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1593), but most pertinent to the origins of *Pericles* is the story of 'Unlawful love' that forms Book VIII of Gower's collection of courtly fables on the nature of love, *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390). Apart from Gower, whose tetrameter poem supplies the entire plot of *Pericles*, Shakespeare appears to have consulted Laurence Twine's English translation of a French version of the tale as recorded in the 153rd story of the *Gesta Romanorum*, a Latin collection of anecdotes and tales compiled in the fourteenth century. Entitled *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*, Twine's novella was entered into the Stationer's Register in 1576 and reprinted several times during Shakespeare's lifetime. The last edition extant was printed in 1607, around the time that *Pericles* is thought to have been composed. The fact that Wilkins, Shakespeare's probable collaborator on the play, also published a prose romance by the title of *The Painfull Aduentures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* in 1608 (the same year that Shakespeare's play was entered in the Stationer's Register), not only shows that this ancient tale of Greco-Asian origins has its own adventurous story of dissemination and longevity, but also that it was very much part of contemporary popular culture.³⁷

The play's impetus towards spectacular bodily and textual 'restorations' is clearly not to be missed. Nor is its evident investment in ancient rites (and rights), something that prompted Ben Jonson's notorious dismissal of *Pericles* as "a mouldy tale ... and stale" ("Ode" 355). While Jonson's judgement of the play's staleness may have been clouded by professional envy, the coinage 'mouldy tale' could not have been more apt for a play that flaunts its fabrication from a shifting spectrum of literary discourses. The language of folktale, moralistic poetry and prose romance form the mould out of which something new is created, something that is both

³⁷ For a detailed history of the Apollonius tale and its metamorphoses see Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991). For a concise summary of the cumulative evidence supporting the theory that *Pericles* is the product of a collaborative effort by Shakespeare and Wilkins, cf. Gossett 55-70.

narrative and drama. As embodied literary allusion, Gower himself is unique amongst Shakespeare's choric figures in that he represents not only the play's narrator but also its principal source. Gower's ancient pedigree, however, is clearly not emphasised for mere nostalgic gratification. As the play unfolds across vast expanses of time and space, it requires an author(itative) figure like "moral Gower" who "stand i' th'gaps to teach ... / The stages of our story" (4.4.8-9), to hold together this romantic *bricolage* with a 'body of knowledge' that is conceived at the interstices of page and stage, death and life, nature and art.³⁸

The project that Shakespeare (and his collaborator/s) pursues with *Pericles* is an ambitious one: on the one hand, Gower's interventions in outmoded verse effectively separate the play into seven narrative sections rather than five acts. This not only serves to estrange the audience from the dramatic action, but also draws their attention to the contrivance of what they see and hear. On the other hand, this same embodied artifice is used to secure the spectators' imaginative participation without which neither Gower nor his tale could be infused with dramatic life. "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-5), as Paulina says in *The Winter's Tale*, before any resurrection can take place.³⁹ Throughout the play, we are asked to intertwine these incongruous angles of audio-vision in our response to such an anamorphic text. Moulding together the literary and the lifelike under the auspices of restoration, shape-shifting Gower offers us a first glimpse of what it means to enter the protean realm of Shakespearean romance in which, to appropriate Herbert Marcuse's words, the "encounter with the truth of art happens in the estranging language and images which make perceptible, visible, and audible that which is no longer, or not yet, perceived, said, and heard in everyday life" (qtd. in Ryan 18). By accepting Gower's bodily resurrection, we also accept the re-creative power of (his) art, something that effects our transition into a world less ordinary in which, once we have reconciled our ears to our eyes, the "quaint fairy tale" is transformed into a play that matters (DelVecchio and Hammond 30).

2.2 Incestuous Beginnings

I am no viper, yet I feed
On mother's flesh which did me breed.
(*Per.* 1.1.65-66)

³⁸ Gower's reputation as a staunch moral advocate was perpetuated by his friend and contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer, who dedicated his *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1383) to "moral Gower" (5.1856).

³⁹ Quotations from *The Winter's Tale* follow the Arden Shakespeare edition edited by J. H. P. Pafford. (London: Routledge, 1993) unless mentioned otherwise.

As if to test the audience's newly acquired faith in his 'restorative' powers, Gower's 'old song' begins with a relation of vice that seems all but restoring: King Antiochus' flagrantly incestuous relationship with his daughter, the princess and heir to the throne, whom Pericles has come to woo. Accordingly, the *mise en scène* that Gower uncovers to the 'judging eyes' of his audience is framed by "yon grim looks" (1.Chorus.40), the severed heads of the hitherto unsuccessful suitors that comprise the speechless and yet disturbingly eloquent audience of Pericles' romantic quest in Antiochus. Their "dead cheeks" (1.1.40) assume iconic significance: as monuments of flesh their "speechless tongues and semblance pale" (1.1.37) are a visual testament to the 'unspeakable' sin that lurks behind fair outward show, a theme that reappears in several guises to haunt the play throughout. The gruesome heads thus form a kind of visual overture to the equally disturbing body imagery that pervades the first scene of the play. Providing an undercurrent of menacing sexuality that punctuates the rather superficial chivalric plot, this imagery helps to create what McCabe has described as "a peculiarly oppressive, stifling atmosphere of decadent eroticism suggestive of sterility and decay" that has instigated a variety of psychoanalytic readings (181).⁴⁰ Even though Pericles is initially blind to the fact that his princess, the "glorious casket," is "stor'd with ill" (1.1.78), from the beginning of the play he never quite manages to exemplify the ardent and fearless chivalric knight of medieval romance. Instead, Hamlet-like, Pericles comes across as preternaturally weary of life, voicing his readiness "by those fearful objects [the severed heads] to prepare / This body, like to them, to what I must" (1.1.44-45).⁴¹ He expresses this morbid disposition in response to Antiochus' unveiled castration threat ("because thine eye / Presumes to reach, all the whole heap must die" [1.1.33-34]), which forms part of the Law of the Father in Antioch, a city significantly named after its ruling monarch.⁴² In Jacques Lacan's interpretation of the Oedipal crisis, the

⁴⁰ See, for example, Coppélia Kahn, "The Providential Tempest and the Shakespearean Family," in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, ed. Murray Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 217-43; C. L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, "'The masked Neptune and / The gentlest winds of heaven': *Pericles* and the Transition from Tragedy to Romance," *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) 298-342; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, "Hamlet" to "The Tempest"* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴¹ Developing this point further, Nevo argues that the play is in fact structured around Pericles' own incestuous desires "which he must repress and from which he must flee" ("Perils" 69). In the light of such a psychoanalytic reading, Pericles' melancholic frame of mind is explained by his unconscious sexual guilt. In this context it is also interesting to find that Bishop Arthur Lake in his *Sermons with Some Religions Meditations* (1629) refers to incest as a "*funestation* of a mans [sic] selfe" (qtd. in McCabe 181, emphasis in original).

⁴² In his interpretation of Hoffmann's story of "The Sand-Man" in "The 'Uncanny'" (1919), Freud posits a substitutive relationship between the eye and the male sex organ: "The study of dreams, fantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration" (231). I believe that this substitutive relation

father takes on a legislative and prohibitive function (*le 'non'* and *le nom du père*), laying down the incest taboo that forbids the son to have sexual access to his mother (cf. Evans 119). In a significant twist, Antiochus' law simultaneously seems to adhere to and transgress this taboo, since it enables an incestuous relationship between father and daughter, while access to the mother-wife is denied to the suitor-sons: "he made a law, / To keep her still, and men in awe" (1.Chorus.35-36). As Antiochus' warning "touch not, upon thy life, / For that's an article within our law / As dangerous as the rest" (1.1.88-90) suggests, any attempt to transgress this law has mortal consequences.

Anxious not to displease his potential father-in-law, Pericles' courtly praise of Antiochus' daughter accordingly steers clear of any explicit corporeal involvement: more than happy to sacrifice his 'tainted' body, he merely feels entitled to enjoy the "unspotted fire of love" (1.1.54). However, Pericles soon learns that in Antioch "Sharp physic is the last" (1.1.73) – incest, not spiritual love, forms the basis of Antiochus' riddle and, in extension, of his legislative system. The primal scene thus literally serves as an eye-opener to Pericles, who discovers that Antiochus' daughter, the admired "Fair glass of light" (1.1.77) is foul, corrupted from within, "as black as incest" (1.2.76). Within the space of one hundred lines, the quaint fairy tale turns into a carnal nightmare, a bizarre perversion of familiar courtship rituals, which confront the questing hero with a double-bind situation from which there seems to be no escape. Contrary to the mythical archetype where the hero answers the question, eliminates the sphinx and frees the land from sterility, winning and losing in Antioch turn out to be equally lethal. If he gives the wrong answer to the riddle, Pericles loses his head. If he answers correctly, Pericles has to acknowledge the incestuous relationship between father and daughter, something which Antiochus wants to prevent at all costs: "he must / Not live to trumpet forth my infamy, / Nor tell the world that Antiochus doth sin / In such a loathed manner" (1.1.145-48).

The enigmatic quality of the first scene, something that is corroborated by its dramatic economy, finds its structural analogue in the narrative device of the riddle. As a riddle whose purpose is deception, not revelation, it violates the grammar of riddling, just as incest violates the social order (cf. Gorfain 136). Pericles, in other words, is faced with a perverse puzzle that subverts all distinctions. Instead of contributing to the eradication of "death-like dragons" (1.1.30), the riddle in *Pericles* discloses the existence of a 'monster' at the heart of procreation: an "eater of her mother's flesh" (1.1.131) the nameless daughter Pericles has come to woo

also works for *Pericles*, a play that has many parallels to the incestuous tragedy of Oedipus. In *Pericles*, Antiochus becomes the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected, something that is enforced by the presence of the severed heads and the 'blind' eyes of the unsuccessful suitors that frame the courting scene.

personifies incest, the sin that dare not speak its name. The literary trope intimates that by taking her mother's place, by appropriating her social identity, the daughter literally usurps the mother's body, thereby also 'devouring' her origin. Usually employed in early modern drama to express a fundamental violation of nature, incest in *Pericles* confounds not only natural law but also debases the sacred.⁴³ As McCabe points out, the diction that is used to describe the coalescence of distinctive social categories ("He's father, son, and husband mild; / I mother, wife, and yet his child" [1.1.69-70]) actually parodies a well-known conceit that is exclusively applicable to the miraculous and sacred relationships obtaining within the holy family (cf. 183). An extract from William Herbert's fourteenth century religious lyric "Orison to the Virgin" sufficiently serves to illustrate this point:

Thou wommon bouthe fere,
 Thine own fader bere,
 Gret wonder this was,
 That on wommon was moder,
 To fader and hire brother,
 So never other nas. (qtd. in McCabe 183)

As linguistic distillation of an impossible co-existence of disorder and order, standing at and for the point of coincidence where boundaries are defined and violated, simultaneously inviting and frustrating formal expectations, the riddle opens up a catalytic vortex, a *mise en abyme*, into the fairy-tale realm of romance (cf. Gorfain 134). Language in Antioch proves ineffective and courtly praise is merely a decoration of vice. Pericles deciphers the riddle only to find himself in a hermetic court where "breath is gone" and "sore eyes see clear" (1.1.100). Antioch, as Palfrey observes, represents "a theatre of narcissism, paralysis, and, if not silence, then verbal atrophy" (59), a notion evidently shared by theatrical director Augusto Fernandes, whose 1981 German production of the play (*Perikles, Fürst von Tyrus*) for the Deutsche Schauspielhaus Hamburg opened with the realistic-looking heads of the unsuccessful suitors lined up at the front of the stage, their 'sightless' gaze directed at the audience.⁴⁴ Pericles, who like his fellow victims is forced to "swear to silence" (2.1.20),⁴⁵ eventually acquiesces to political censorship

⁴³ In his political testament *Basiliakon Doron* (first written in 1598), King James in fact refers to incest as one of the "horrible crymes that yee are bound in conscience neuer to forgiue" (23).

⁴⁴ References to performances of Shakespeare's plays are listed by their title in the 'Works Cited' section, unless indicated otherwise.

⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that in a deconstructive manoeuvre that recalls the tell-tale eloquence of the mute skulls, Pericles does exactly what he disclaims to do: he promises to keep quiet in form of a speech that gives forceful expression to the crime that has been committed (cf. 1.1.92-108).

and – as if perceiving his inadequacy as heroic knight – makes his escape from this early modern version of *Shutter Island*.⁴⁶

Although knowledge of sin in the first scene has been communicated through the actively desiring eye, the eye that ‘presumed to reach,’ it is this visual sense, this visual sensuality that is continuously evoked in the play only to be exorcised or rather, contained by verbal context. Like a hall of mirrors, echoes of incest flash through Pericles’ ensuing travels and travails, something director Andrei Serban translated visually in his ‘deconstructive’ production for the American Repertory Theatre in Boston in 2003, where soft-porn video clips depicting Antiochus and his daughter were intermittently shown throughout the performance. Back in Tyre, Pericles finds that “pleasures court mine eyes, and mine eyes shun them” (1.2.7). Feeling troubled by a guilt he cannot put into words, he decides to dispel the sterile shadows of Antioch through a more (pro)creative course of action. While Pericles thus absents himself from his kingdom and from the stage, heading for Tharsus whose starving citizens he intends to relieve with shiploads of corn, the audience is brought up to speed on the cause of the Tharsian’s economic downturn. Famine here seems to be the direct result of impotent governance. As Cleon, Governor of Tharsus, laments at length, the city has been brought down by its inhabitants’ over-indulgence in the cardinal sins of gluttony, sloth and pride: “Their tables were stor’d full to glad the sight / And not so much to feed on as delight. / All poverty was scorned, and pride so great / The name of help grew odious to repeat” (1.4.28-32). The theme of incest resurfaces in the feeding imagery used to express the regressive collapse of values, this time through the self-devouring act of cannibalism:

Those mothers who, to nuzzle up their babes
Thought nought too curious, are ready now
To eat those little darlings whom they lov’d. (1.4.42-44)

The arrival of Pericles’ impressive fleet is watched anxiously by Cleon, Governor of Tharsus, whose words of warning echo the lesson learned at Antioch: “Who makes the fairest show means most deceit” (1.4. 75). Pericles in turn tries to allay such fears with a curious conceit about the Trojan horse:

⁴⁶ I could not resist this reference to Martin Scorsese’s psychological thriller film (2010), based on Dennis Lehane’s 2003 bestselling novel of the same name, which appeared in my ‘mind’s eye’ when analysing this scene. In *Shutter Island* the questing hero, U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels, embarks on a tempest-tossed investigation in a hospital of the criminally insane where he is confronted with confounding and increasingly disturbing clues. The synopsis on the official Paramount Pictures film website reads: “what starts as a routine investigation quickly takes a sinister turn. As the investigation unfolds and Teddy uncovers more shocking and terrifying truths about the island, he learns that there are some places that never let you go” (*Shutterisland.com*). The same could be said about Pericles and the shadows of Antioch.

... these our ships, you happily may think
 Are like the Trojan horse was stuff'd within
 With bloody veins expecting overthrow,
 Are store'd with corn to make your needy bread,
 And give them life whom hunger starv'd half dead.
 (1.4.92-96)

Using language to materialise the birth-giving, nourishing possibilities of an opaque, ostensibly threatening body Pericles attempts, it appears, to exorcise the self-destructive processes at work both in the Tharsian context and in his own history. His magnanimous act of charity is eventually accepted as such and even commemorated by monumental offspring – a statue that is set up by the Tharsian citizens “to remember what he does” (2.Chorus.13).

But Pericles' painful adventures are far from over: it takes a tempest and a shipwreck for Pericles to literally wash his hands of the unfortunate episode at Antioch. As Gower informs us, on his voyage back to Tyre Pericles' ship and crew perish in a storm and “he, good prince, having all lost, / By waves from coast to coast is toss'd. / ... Till Fortune, tir'd with doing bad, / Threw him ashore, to give him glad” (2.Chorus.33-38). Cast up naked from the belly of the Mediterranean Sea, Pericles is reborn as anonymous everyman “bereft of ... all his fortunes” (2.1.9). His ‘unaccommodated’ body presents an absence of all but somatic distinctions:

What I have been I have forgot to know;
 But what I am, want teaches me to think on:
 A man throng'd up with cold. (2.1.71-73)

In phrases reminiscent of *King Lear*, it is only when reduced to bare essentials (save, of course, his father's rusty armour which is conveniently retrieved from the devouring sea by passing fishermen), an unspectacular knight in a courtly tournament, that Pericles can hope to transcend appearances by his refusal to be tempted by another “Beauty's child, whom Nature gat / For men to see, and seeing wonder at” (2.2.6-7). This time the subject of common admiration is King Simonides' daughter Thaisa. Clinging to his motto “*In hac spe vivo*” (2.2.43) (In this hope I live), Pericles, who is still recovering from the traumatic experiences of his first mismatch, is conveniently set free from the shadows of Antioch by a startling structural interpolation: the news of the death of Antiochus and his daughter is dramatically interposed between the courtship scenes at Pentapolis. And again: the Antiochian *mise en scène* that is set up by Gower's narration is inherently spectacular:

A fire from heaven came and shrivell'd up
 Their bodies, even to loathing; for they so stunk,
 That all those eyes ador'd them ere their fall
 Scorn now their hand should give them burial (2.4.9-12)

Antiochus' sin is revealed and punished in full *sight* of his subjects. What divine intervention discloses to their 'adoring eyes' is that what seemed so 'fair' is 'foul,' a shift in perspective forcefully corroborated by the graphic description of the unpleasant stench which emanates from the burning bodies of the sinning couple.⁴⁷

Pentapolis, represented by the hospitable, exogamous house of Simonides, provides a positive foil for the barren, incestuous palace of Antiochus. In a symmetrical reversal, images that were violated at Antioch are successively given a benevolent turn in this Greek colony. For Pericles and the audience however, as Nevo points out, "threatening parental figures, imagery of bodily injury, menace and engulfment" still magnetise the whole "semiotic environment" ("Perils" 76). But the context has changed. Whereas government in Antiochus is based on lust, the "sensuall and irracionall mocions, rising out of the infectious mudd of flesh and bloud" which, according to political writer and playwright Edward Forset (1606), make up the natural body of the monarch with a tyrannical disposition (16), Pentapolis is ruled by a king who is appreciated by his subjects for his "peaceable reign and good government" (2.1.101).⁴⁸ Against the backdrop of a harmonious body politic, hermeneutic ambiguities are contained and constrained by the formalised entertainment of a tournament. The heraldic game in which the knights present their *impresas* (consisting of a personal motto and an accompanying emblematic picture) gives scope to the recognition of individual skill and honour, which as the fifth *impresa* suggests, "is to be made not of wordes onely, but also by the action & performance of the deedes" (Paradin qtd. in F. D. Hoeniger 56n38).⁴⁹ In contrast to Antiochus and Tharsus, where fair show hides deceit, things are what they appear to be at Pentapolis. King Simonides has no doubt about the revelatory aspects of a good performance: "every worth in show commends itself" (2.3.6).

Such a view neatly chimes in with the romantic conception that true nobility cannot hide itself: even though he tries to keep a low profile by refusing to engage in an active courtship

⁴⁷ In this context it is interesting to note that the prevalence of the eye-imagery and the emphasis on physical detail (something that is echoed in the brothel scenes) is exclusive to Shakespeare's adaptation of the tale. The emphasis on the disgusting smell, however, can also be found in Stubbes's description of King Antiochus in his popular Puritan manifesto *Anatomie of Abuses* (first published in 1583). Listing a number of legendary kings who received divine punishment for their sin of pride, King Antiochus, "intending to ouerthrowe and sacke Ierusalem ... was for his pride ouerturned in his chariote, ... his belly bursting, and filthy wormes crawling out most lothsomly, and in fine, began so to stinke and smell, as neither his seruantes nor hee himselfe could abide his owne sauor, and thus ended his life in great misery and wretchednes" (132-133; lines 2932-2941).

⁴⁸ See Constance Jordan's essay on "'Eating the Mother': Property and Propriety in *Pericles*," in *Creative Imagination: New Essays on Renaissance Literature in Honor of Thomas M. Greene*, ed. David Quint et al. (Binghamton, New York: Binghamton UP, 1992) 331-54, for a detailed analysis on how the image of incest can be read as a political metaphor expressing an abuse of monarchic power.

⁴⁹ Hoeniger here quotes from an English translation of Claude Paradin's *Devises Heroiques* (1591), the first collection of devices and their meaning.

(“never did my actions yet commence / A deed might gain her love or your displeasure” [2.5.52-53]), Pericles nevertheless manages to commend himself to Simonides and his daughter, Thaisa, who do not judge him by his rusty appearance and appreciate his ‘innate’ chivalric capabilities instead. Interestingly enough, it is the latter who, like her daughter later in the play, spells out the intricate relationship between performance and (sexual) honour. Thaisa is reminded by Simonides that it is her honourable duty, her “honour . . . to entertain / The labour of each knight in his device” (2.2.14-15). Her reply contains a suggestive pun on the word honour; its meaning is modified ironically by *paranomasia* to expose the request for what it is: a command to play her part in the proscribed match-making: “Which, to preserve mine honour, I’ll perform” (2.2.16). Unlike Antiochus’ nameless daughter, however, Thaisa refuses to be a mere pawn in this tournament: she is outspoken about her sexual preferences, singling out Pericles among all the knights: “All viands that I eat do seem unsavoury / Wishing him my meat” (2.3.31-32). What might have been a disturbing echo of the feeding-imagery employed before, is here clearly transformed into an uninhibited expression of desire. Pericles, on the other hand, clearly prefers to resort to the safe haven of melancholic contemplation. Unable to react to Thaisa’s words of encouragement, this traumatised romantic knight needs to be coaxed into courteous and courageous action by Simonides’ reminder (full of dramatic irony, considering the turn of events later in the play) that “here’s a lady that wants breathing too” (2.3.100). Commanded to take part in the dance, Pericles comes into close physical contact with Thaisa, a situation whose wider significance can only be conveyed in performance: on stage it is generally elaborated as a non-verbal means to infuse the rather one-sided textual courtship – so far clearly dominated by Thaisa – with something that approaches mutuality. Thus, in the televised adaptation of the play that David Jones directed for the BBC in 1984, Thaisa and Pericles repeatedly touch palms and exchange glances in a Basse Dance sequence that emphasises the growing attraction between them. A similar method was employed in Nigel Terry’s 1989 production in Stratford-upon-Avon, where, as Peter Kemp from the *Independent* observed, the “Lovers draw together . . . in a languorous, erotically charged *pas de deux*” (14). A shared dance, according to the early modern humanist Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1490-1546), “betokeneth concord,” a harmony between man and woman that “may be signified matrimony” (qtd. in Filmer 9).

In both sources of the play, the courtship is prolonged when Pericles, exercising his skill as musician, is appointed as Thaisa’s schoolmaster. This event, however, is quickly glossed over in the play. Here the emphasis instead is placed on Pericles’ honourable and self-abnegating conduct that needs to, it seems, make good on his original ‘trespass’ in Antioch: “I came unto your court for honour’s cause, / And not to be a rebel to her state” (2.5.6-61). When

Simonides finally does confront Pericles with the allegation that Thaisa is in love with him, Pericles (who, one must presume, ignored all the hints) experiences an uncomfortable feeling of déjà-vu and vehemently denies that any form of physical exchange has taken place:

Resolve your angry father, if my tongue
Did e'er solicit, or my hand subscribe
To any syllable that made love to you. (2.5.67-9)

Luckily for him, this time his potential father-in-law is not only pleased at his daughter's stubborn persistence in her choice of husband, but also regards disobedience to paternal authority as the basic prerequisite for marriage: "Either be rul'd by me, or I'll make you – / Man and wife." (2.5.82-3). Moreover, this exceptionally liberal father-figure does not evade or rule-out the topic of sexuality, but explicitly reminds Pericles that such an undertaking as marriage needs more than spiritual commitment: "your hands and lips must seal it too" (2.5.84). It is only at this point that Pericles is able to fully appreciate Thaisa's vivacity. Her capacity to infuse "blood unto your life" (2.3.77) is eventually counterbalanced physically and verbally in Pericles' declaration of love in which he confesses that he loves her "Even as my life my blood that fosters it" (2.5.87). In response to such wholesome rhetoric the good King Simonides, to borrow T. G. Bishop's words, "boots the bewildered couple into bed and slams the door on the second Act" (103).

2.3 Re-membering the Corpse

... the belching whale
And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse.
(*Per.* 3.1.62-63)

The first half of the play with its scenes of suspect parentage is thus brought to a satisfyingly comic resolution. And yet, according to Knight, the 'real body' of the play is only about to come into existence (cf. 33).⁵⁰ As its obsessive structural parallels and thematic repetitions suggest, however, it seems that – contrary to Wilson Knight's observation – the 'body proper' of this play derives sustenance from its 'parasitic' margins. Just as incest in the play cannot be contained within one body or one locality, the numerous intertextual and intratextual references or "Scraps out of every dish" which, in Jonson's view, make up this 'mouldy tale,'

⁵⁰ The evident difference in style between the first two acts and the remaining three has been the basis of the general critical concurrence that only the latter part of the play can be 'safely' assigned to Shakespeare, a theory first proposed in the eighteenth century by editors Nicolas Rowe, Richard Farmer and William Warburton. For a concise discussion of the evidence for collaboration, cf. Gossett 62-70.

lose nothing of their virulence as Pericles' journey continues ("Ode" 355). Instead, as I will show, they form an essential part of the play's DNA, so to speak. As discursive subtext, these references galvanise the conventional romantic tropes of loss and recovery that are writ large in the second half of the play. For Ron Daniels, who directed *Pericles* to critical acclaim at Stratford-upon-Avon's The Other Place in 1979, the play is structured like a "fugue or patterned dance, of fathers, daughters, suitors" (qtd. in Mulryne 292). Events and family constellations repeat themselves in this play whose second beginning seems to come full circle to the tragic family history of Antioch, which began with the death of a mother. Gower's narrative 'teaser,' which introduces the third act, anticipates another such loss in the pun on the word 'maidenhead' (head of a maiden, virginity). This time, however, loss is inherently connected with the birth of a new generation: "by the loss of maidenhead / A babe is moulded" (3.Chorus.10-11).

The elemental rage that dominates the stage action of the first scene of the third act functions as another clean-sweeping agency in the story: tempest-tossed, Pericles is about to be deprived of yet another social position when his new-found identity as husband is exchanged for that of a single parent. These 'transformations' are accompanied by a complex manipulation of body-imagery both on a figurative and a physical level. The pains accompanying childbirth, the "pangs / of my queen's travails" (3.1.13-14) are aligned to the boat that is shaken by the storm: both together 'give birth' to a child that is at the same time part of a corporeal entity ("this piece / Of your dead queen" [3.1.17-18]) and, as Marina's name suggests, an embodied symbol which in a synecdochic manner stands for the unruly elements that shape Pericles' fortunes. Far from being born as a "fresh-new seafarer" (3.1.41) into the second half of the play, Pericles' daughter Marina arrives in a semiotic environment that is already infiltrated by the traces of the play's previous history: her presence alone, together with the conspicuous removal of her mother, recreates an intimate father-daughter relation that in this play, as I have shown, is fraught with overtones of incest. Not only does Marina assume her mother's place in flesh, but also in name: in the play's two main sources Thaisa is the daughter's, not the mother's name. In Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Pericles' daughter is called Thaise, while Twine calls her Tharsia (cf. Gower 403; Twine 451). As Bishop points out, the fact that in *Pericles* these names are conflated and transferred to the mother is characteristic of the play's impulse to "retain but surpass the history of its own telling" (197n18). As with the riddle of Antioch, mother and daughter are hard to tell apart, something

that in more recent productions has conventionally been emphasised through double casting.⁵¹ It is interesting to note, moreover, that in *Pericles* the body of the cast away mother is not simply done away with. Compensatory gifts and a poetical farewell embellish her coffin, deflecting attention away from the fact that not much persuasion is needed to convince Pericles that “your queen must overboard” (3.1.46). In this Shakespeare once again differs from his sources where, to take Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* as an obvious example, the Pericles figure, as Jeanie Grant Moore remarks, “swoons and weeps through many lines of poetry” (39). The lyrical appeal of Pericles’ imaginative rumination about the way in which his wife’s body is transformed by the benevolent metamorphic agency of the sea (“the belching whale / And humming water must o’erwhelm thy corpse” [3.1.62-63]), effectively glosses over the actual dramatic transference of Thaisa’s body, the way in which the birth mother is (yet again) surreptitiously exorcised from the play. The maternal body in *Pericles*, it appears, is only allowed to exist under erasure – it is poetically supplanted by the amniotic “ooze” (3.1.60) of the all-encompassing sea. As David Cressy notes in his book on *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (1997), the metaphor of the sea frequently appears in contemporary descriptions of the birthing process. To illustrate this point, Cressy quotes Robert Barrett who in his *Companion for Midwives, Child-Bearing Women and Nurses* (1699) specifically compares the womb “to a rough sea, in which the child floats for the space of nine months. The labour of delivery is the only port, but full of dangerous rocks” (qtd. in Cressy 44). Marina, as her name suggests, is not ‘of woman born’ but formed by the very element that removed from Thaisa’s body all traces of motherhood, and which is (conveniently) instrumental in thwarting Pericles’ attempts to fully embrace his responsibilities as husband, father, and king respectively.

Any such unsettling resonances are mitigated in the following scene, which is entirely devoted to Thaisa’s resurrection – a miracle that is worked in front of the audience’s eyes. In a curious analogue to the fourth scene of the second act, the scene whose sole purpose was to erase the stench of Antioch, this episode, culminating in a disclosure more “visionary than metaphysical” (Knight 57), focuses on “delicate odour” (3.2.63), the rich sensual beauty of Thaisa’s paradoxically animated corpse (a theme that will reappear in *The Winter’s Tale*). Unsurprisingly, the detailed physical description deals exclusively with the upper part of Thaisa’s body:

Behold, her eyelids, cases to those

⁵¹ Examples include the 1969 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company directed by Terry Hands, Augusto Fernandes’ 1981 production for the Deutsche Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, and Yukio Ninagawa’s 2003 production for the National Theatre, London.

Heavenly jewels which Pericles hath lost,
 Begin to part their fringes of bright gold.
 Live,
 And make us weep to hear your fate, fair creature
 Rare as you seem to be. (3.2.100-106)

The immediacy of the somatic revival is eventually framed by a semantic one: Thaisa's body is accompanied by a "passport" (3.2.68), an identity document penned by Pericles. Although the writing specifies the fact that this corpse was once daughter and queen to a king, the letter significantly fails to mention both Thaisa's name and the fact that she has just given birth to a child. When the lady who wanted breathing before is eventually given 'air' through Cerimon's restorative powers, Thaisa's identity is re-scripted and her body re-enclosed through the explanatory scroll that excises all traces of motherhood from her biography. Unable to remember whether she has in fact given birth at sea (cf. 3.4.5-7),⁵² Thaisa decides to assume the life of a vestal virgin ("A vestal livery will I take me to" [3.4.9]) and for the rest of the play is thus literally and symbolically stowed away in the temple of Diana, goddess of chastity and childbirth – also known as patroness of margins (cf. R. Parker 446).⁵³

Thaisa is not alone in her predicament as female castaway: the process of her revival is dramatically interpolated by the description of Marina's abandonment. After a year's stay at Tharsus, Pericles decides to hit the sea again, leaving Marina to the care of her nurse and in the hands of her foster-parents, the Tharsian royal couple. No explanation is given for this decision, something that has encouraged critics to supply various.⁵⁴ More often than not, these speculations connect Pericles' departure with his equally enigmatic vow that "Till she be married ... all / Uncissor'd shall this hair of mine remain, / Though I show ill in't (3.3.27-31).⁵⁵ A token of his grief, it also signals that Pericles once again seems all too ready "to prepare / This body ... to what I must" (1.1.44-45): putting the space of the sea between himself and his daughter, he can lose himself "to his own desire" (4.Chorus.2) and safely succumb to the "lure of regression" by fashioning himself into a floating exile (Hiscock 25).

⁵² It should be emphasised at this point that in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* Thaisa is very well able to remember having given birth and assumes that both her husband and child have subsequently drowned (cf. 402). In this context it is also interesting to note that in Twine's narrative Thaisa's reversal of social position is made even more explicit by the fact that she is adopted by Cerimon for his own daughter (cf. 450).

⁵³ In David Thacker's 1989 production of the play for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Thaisa and Diana are in fact conflated bodily when Sally Edwards, the actress playing Thaisa, re-enters the stage two acts later in the role of the goddess.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Leggatt 173; Nevo, "Perils" 80; Palfrey 70.

⁵⁵ As Gossett has pointed out, the meaning of this passage is less than clear since the First Quarto reads: "till she be married ... / All vnistered shall this heyre of mine remayne, / Though I shew will in't" (qtd. in Gossett 46). The spelling here suggests that, like Leontes in the *Winter's Tale*, Pericles promises not to remarry, swearing that his daughter will remain 'unsistered,' i. e. his only heir. In either case, Pericles seems keen to leave Marina's upbringing to someone else.

Shifting the play's focus to Marina's fate Gower once again – narratively speaking – manages to replace such dead ends with new leads. Images of pregnancy align the development of the plot, the “fast-growing scene” (4.Chorus.6), with Marina's education and the exceptional grace which has made her “the heart and place / Of general wonder” (4.Chorus.10-11). Alongside the good, however, evil grows apace: Dionyza's feelings of envy about her foster-daughter's popularity increase in proportion to Marina's development, a “pregnant instrument of wrath” (4.Chorus.44), which eventually brings forth “the unborn event” (4.Chorus.45) we are about to witness. As before, it is the use of body imagery that alerts the audience to the disturbing subtext of Dionyza's speeches: while on the surface she seems to express her concern for Marina's well-being, her wordy obsession with Marina's bodily health tells a different tale. The somatic references jar with the smooth expressions of concern, literally laying bare the bloodthirsty thoughts that motivate those sentences. Advising Marina not to “consume your blood” (4.1.23) or “heat your blood” (4.1.49), Dionyza instead recommends the fresh air of the sea-shore – the place where Marina is to be murdered – as something that “pierces and sharpens the stomach” (4.1.28). Jane Maud, who played Dionyza in David Thacker's 1989 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, exaggerated the pronouncement of the harsh consonants that characterise Dionyza's lines, thereby anticipating the physical assault on an aural as well as on a linguistic level. Through this curious amalgam of somatic and semic “truths” that characterise her speech, Dionyza articulates her falseness to the perceptive audience that by now should know only too well what she means when she reassures Marina that she is loved with “more than foreign heart” (4.1.33). Towards the end of Dionyza's speech the very choice of diction betrays her motivation when she urges Marina to “reserve that excellent complexion which did *steal* / *The eyes* of young and old” (4.1.39-41, my emphasis). Like Antiochus' nameless daughter, Marina has had the misfortune of being born a visual paragon, diverting attention away from her foster-mother's own child: “None would look on her, / But cast their gazes on Marina's face” (4.3.32-33).

Marina, of course, lives in blissful ignorance of the double entendres that shape-shift her life. When she does indeed venture near the sea, her fate (at least as some critics would have it) is worse than death. Instead of being killed through the hands of Leonine, Marina falls into the hands of pirates who – true to the conventions of romance – conveniently happen to be in the right place at the right time.⁵⁶ Like her mother before her, Marina's sea-voyage takes her off-limits, from the margins of the sea to the margins of society. Saved from certain death by “roguing thieves” (4.1.95) rather than by a benevolent hobby-physician, Marina's place of

⁵⁶ One could argue that the mere presence of a character named Leonine in the play anticipates Marina's impending fate, since in the *Confessio Amantis*, Leonin [sic!] is the name of the master of the brothel.

recovery – a brothel in Mytilene – presents an ironic counterpart to the virginal temple of Diana where Thaisa is immured. Certain that the task of murdering Marina has been taken off his hands, Leonine’s statement – “I’ll swear she’s dead / And thrown into the sea” (4.1.98) – explicitly ties up this analogous movement of the plot and provides a sardonic foil to Pericles’ disposal of his wife.

2.4 Recovering the Ulcerous Sores

To the choleric fisting of every rogue
 Thy ear is liable; thy food is such
 As hath been belch’d on by infected lungs.
 (*Per.* 4.6.166-68)

The infamous brothel scenes that provide the backdrop for Marina’s sexual initiation have prompted Victorian critic Frederick G. Fleay to an expression of moral revulsion that recalls Tyrrell’s stance on the literary treatment of incest. Feeling certain that “He [Shakespeare] would not have indulged in the morbid anatomy of such loathsome characters,” Fleay, writing for the New Shaksper [sic] Society in 1874, argues that Shakespeare, had he been the author, “would have covered the ulcerous sores with a film of humour, if it were a necessary part of his moral surgery to treat them at all” (196). In fact, however, there exists a significant difference between the aestheticism of the incest scene whose morbid sensual appeal disturbed Tyrrell, and the grisly depiction of sex trade that Fleay wants surgically removed. Like incest, prostitution represents a sexual exchange that is illicit and ultimately barren. But whereas incest in Antioch signifies the refusal of change, exchange in any form is writ large in Mytilene, where women are passed from one customer to another, where bodies spawn diseases, and where Marina first sets eyes on her future husband.

At the beginning of the fourth act, therefore, the sublime mystery of courtly romance meets yet another tarnished antipode: in Mytilene’s outskirts sex rules, too, but here it is clearly considered part of a thriving commercial business. As the verbal exchange between Pandar, the pandering owner of the brothel, and Boulton, his equally aptly named doorman, illustrates: the resident discourse of contempt and consumerism “allows no space for the body beyond its commodification. There is neither private subjectivity nor public homogeneity, but only members for the machine.” (Palfrey 206). The prostitutes are valued according to their shelf life: there are either “fresh ones” (4.2.10) that are still “raw in their entertainment” (4.2.51) or those who “with continual action are even as good as rotten” (4.2.8-9); “pitifully sodden” (4.2.18) or overcooked, they are liable to transform customers into “roast-meat for worms”

(4.2.23). Thacker's production at the Swan in Stratford-upon-Avon did much to convey the abjectness of this scene in which, as Peter Kemp succinctly put it in his review for *The Independent*, "Whores retch and vomit" and "Mucky slops are sluiced out" (14). In these stomach-churning surroundings Marina's name is given a different spin. As her husband-to-be phrases it: she is a dish that would "serve after a long voyage at sea" (4.6.42). A "joint" (4.2.129) that has been bargained for, a piece of meat from which Boult may "cut a morsel off the spit" (4.2.130), Marina is the sum of her bodily attributes and is to be used at will. Foremost amongst these is her intact maidenhead, focus of the barrage of metaphors of injury, force, mutilation and cannibalism unleashed in the brothel scenes (cf. Nevo, "Perils" 82). Thus, exasperated at Marina's constant refusal to 'untie her virgin knot' (cf. 4.3.146), Boult threatens to "have your maidenhead taken off, or the common hangman shall execute it" (4.6.127-28), while Bawd enjoins him to "Crack the glass of her virginity, and make the rest malleable" (4.6.142-43). But as the only nun in this unlikely temple, the militantly chaste Marina remains adamant: under no circumstances will she perform "unholy service" (4.4.50).

Instead of passively awaiting her fate, however, Marina successfully resorts to "virginal fencing" (4.6.56) in order to protect herself. When Bawd instructs Marina on how best to profit from her plight, she unwittingly teaches Marina how to turn her stay at the brothel to her own advantage:

Mark me: you must seem to do that fearfully
 which you commit willingly; despise profit where you
 have most gain. To weep that you live as ye do makes
 pity in your lovers: seldom but that pity begets you a
 good opinion, and that opinion a mere profit. (4.2.115-20)

"Performance," as Boult puts it quite bluntly, "shall follow" (4.2.59). Although Marina professes not to understand what Bawd is driving at, her blushes betray her.⁵⁷ On the brothel-stage natural eloquence "must be quench'd with some present practice" (4.2.123-24) in order to secure maximum profit. Ironically, of course, the boy actor playing Marina would have been guilty of just such dissimulation: the impression of a natural body language would have been the result of studious practice, just as the bodily sign which is meant to convey Marina's sexual innocence (the involuntary blushing) is an imaginary creation concocted by fictional statement and possibly cosmetic aids.⁵⁸ For the Puritan commentators of the time at least, such

⁵⁷ On the significance of facial expression in context of early modern theories of physiognomy see Sibylle Baumbach, *Let Me Behold Thy Face: Physiognomie und Gesichtsklängen in Shakespeares Tragödien* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), esp. 101-110.

⁵⁸ On the the use of cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance drama see Annette Drew-Bear, *Painted Faces on the Renaissance Stage: The Moral Significance of Face-Painting Conventions* (London: Associated

‘counterfeiting’ was tantamount to whoring. Thus, the English divine John Rainolds in his anti-theatrical controversy *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (1599) argues that stage-plays should be condemned not only for “making young men come forth in hoores attire” but for “teaching them to counterfeit her actions, her wanton kisse, her impudent face, her wicked speches and entisements” (17).

Although prostitution, as Mullaney has pointed out, is the only commercial activity depicted in the play, the analogue to the early modern English theatre with its traffic of audience, disease and crime is impossible to ignore (cf. 96).⁵⁹ As the many references to theatrical activities in this scene emphasise, the brothel is both culturally and geographically linked to the theatre. Both institutions, as Palfrey has observed, are “fantastical playgrounds of male desire” in which Marina’s virginity assumes the leading part (206). As actress-prostitute, she is endowed with the necessary basics: “She has a good face, speaks well, and has excellent good clothes; there’s no farther necessity of qualities can make her be refus’d” (4.2.44-46). Advertising Marina’s attributes in front of his audience, the potential customers of Mytilene as well as the audience of the play, Boult verbally transfers Marina’s body into a “conglomeration of disseverable and possessable members” (Palfrey 206): “I have cried her almost to the number of her hairs; / I have drawn her picture with my voice” (4.2.91-92). Marina counteracts such anatomising by fashioning herself as an unassailable “piece of virtue” (4.6.111), using the acting advice she has been given for her own protection. As an exasperated Bawd observes:

When she should do for clients her fitment and
do me the kindness of our profession, she has
me her quirks, her reasons, her master-reasons,
her prayers, her knees; that she would make a puritan
of the devil, if he would cheapen a kiss of her. (4.6.5-10)

In the traffic of the brothel, therefore, Marina’s weapon is her rhetorical skill. She learns to acquire a verbal bearing that is able to “freeze the god Priapus, and undo a whole generation” (4.6.3-4).⁶⁰ Refusing to separate name and act, she forces her customers to face fact (cf. Ewbank, “My name” 116): “Do you know this home to be a place of such resort, and will

UP, 1994); Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006); Andrea Ria Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama, 1400-1642* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013).

⁵⁹ For a thorough investigation of the early modern association of theatre with prostitution see Joseph Lenz, “Base Trade: Theatre as Prostitution,” *English Literary History* 60 (1993), 833-855. For a concise description of the early modern theatre as a place of traffic see Stephen Greenblatt’s “General Introduction” to *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 1997), esp. 35-7.

⁶⁰ In *Pericles*, this short passage is the only reference that points to the presence of yet another statue, the overtly sexual idol of Priapus as it is described in Twine (cf. 456). As presiding god of the brothel, Priapus is a fitting counterpart to the statue of Diana in the temple of Ephesus, where the play closes.

come into't?" (4.6.78-9). Her speech, as Lysimachus – governor of Mytilene and Marina's customer-turned-suitor – observes, exposes and thus alters "a corrupted mind" (4.6.103). Those who came to enjoy themselves at a brothel find that they are leaving a temple, praying (cf. 4.6.140). But as Mullaney points out, the theatrical impetus which makes this miraculous conversion possible is kept low-key in order to dissociate Marina from any potentially dubious involvement in the mercantile system of transaction and exchange (cf. 99). For Mullaney, *Pericles* as a whole "represents a radical effort to dissociate the popular stage from its cultural contexts and theatrical grounds of possibility" (101). Dramaturgy is envisioned as a purely aesthetic enterprise, uncontaminated by any references to the incontinent mercantile activity of the Liberties, where the theatres flourished alongside brothels and other more or less illicit forms of alternative entertainment.⁶¹

Marina's *alter ego*, Tharsia in Twine's *Painful Adventures*, is allowed to entertain a more transparent connection to the money-making business. Tharsia, like Scheherazade, moves every one of her successive customers with a theatrically re-enacted romantic narration of her misfortunes, each time raising the price for the 'profession' of her innocence (cf. Twine 457-8). Both Tharsia and Marina use language in order to position themselves as subjects in the anonymous body-industry of the brothel; Tharsia by relating her biography, Marina by moralistic preaching. Both, through rhetorical skill and the promise of even greater cash-output, succeed in establishing their own business enterprise, ironically a school for honest women. While like her many romantic predecessors Marina manages to escape the brothel physically undefiled, her effective participation in the transactive possibilities offered by the brothel-theatre points to ways in which, as Palfrey has suggested, Marina's role departs creatively from her clichéd role-models (cf. 209-210).⁶²

Meanwhile, as the dramatic interpolations into the brothel sequence effectively show, Marina's extended family is no less busy objectifying their lost daughter: what to the Bawd is a "dish of chastity" (4.6.148) best devoured, to Dionyza is "a piece of slaughter" (4.3.2) best denied. In an attempt to conceal "black villainy" (4.4.44), Dionyza's murderous favouritism for her own daughter, Marina's foster parents erect a costly tombstone at Tharsus to commemorate Marina's unlucky 'accident'. Once again Pericles is easily misled by the presence of a 'glorious casket': this time, it is the hypocritical "glittering golden characters" (4.3.44) of

⁶¹ Even though I cannot find that this outlook is supported by the play as a whole, it is perhaps interesting to point out in this context that in contrast to the Globe, the Blackfriars indoor playhouse in which Shakespeare's late plays were also performed from c. 1610, was actually erected on an area near St. Paul's Cathedral which was formerly a Dominican monastery (cf. Greenblatt, "General" 37).

⁶² See also Lorraine Helms "The Saint in the Brothel: Or, Eloquence Rewarded," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990): 319-32, for an illuminating exploration of the Senecan motif of the 'Prostitute Princess' in its legal, religious, literary and rhetorical contexts.

praise inscribed on this monument that move Pericles to his most expressive display of grief yet. Conveyed in a dumb show, a passage of silently mimed action, Pericles' histrionic gestures are reviewed by Gower in the following manner:

See how belief may suffer by foul show!
This borrow'd passion stands for true-ow'd woe;
And Pericles, in sorrow all devour'd,
With sighs shot through and biggest tears o'ershower'd,
Leaves Tharsus and again embarks. (4.4.23-27)

Gower's comments juxtapose authenticity with artifice on several dramatic levels: while Marina's false monument incites true feelings in Pericles, Dionyza only puts on a show of grief. Viewed from a metatheatrical perspective, however, it is Pericles' theatrical display of passion that is 'borrowed' in order to communicate an authenticity of feeling to the audience. Such sorrowful drama, moreover, is enacted within what might also be considered a 'foul show,' the crude and at that time already slightly outmoded framing device of the dumb show, which was more likely to undermine than generate an experience of 'true woe' in the spectators.⁶³ Nothing is but what is not, and yet Gower still asks us to accept both 'foul show' and 'true-ow'd woe' when he embellishes Pericles' display of "mighty passion" (4.4.Dumb show) with equally histrionic verbal descriptions (cf. 4.4.26), only to argue that Pericles' sufferings cannot be adequately expressed in either form since "He bears / A tempest which his mortal vessel tears / And yet he rides it out" (4.4.29-31). Once again, our attention is directed back to Pericles' 'unaccommodated' body. This time, however, his body natural forms the raw material with which he fashions himself into a monumental figure of grief: swearing "Never to wash his face nor cut his hairs. / He puts on sackcloth, and to sea" (4.4. 27-29). Refusing to speak and act any further, Pericles retreats from his kingly office, the world of the court and civilised society, offering himself up to the wayward seas that have moulded his tale so far. While Pericles 'in sorrow all devour'd' thus embraces silence and inertia as the "most conspicuous gesture of suffering, and ... the loudest expression of the role he has sought all along, that of Fortune's tennis-ball," Marina is about to recover speech as the truly transporting and transforming agency in the play (Dickey 562).

⁶³ For a more erudite analysis of the play's complex structural analogies between 'biological, artistic and fraudulent reproductions,' see Phyllis Gorfain's discussion of 'Puzzle and Artifice: The Riddle as Metapoetry in *Pericles*,' in *"Pericles": Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeeel (New York: Garland, 2000) 133-46, esp. 144. Interestingly, for Gorfain the play's "transparent illusion evokes not dismay about, but admiration for the crude instruments with which we navigate an otherwise unknowable universe" (144).

2.5 Bodying forth Recognition

Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee.
(Jonson, *Timber* 625; 2031-32)

Gower's metapoetic commentary paves the way for a general transition in the epistemology of the play: verbal fiction is privileged over visual fact, emphasis is shifted from the physical eye to the 'mind's eye,' from the 'real' to the 'imaginary'. In order to prepare the audience for such an apperceptive transference, Gower asks us to see by listening: "In your supposing once more put your sight, / ... / Where what is done in action, more, if might, / Shall be discover'd; please you sit and *bark*" (5.Chorus.21-4, my emphasis).⁶⁴ Accordingly, the *mise en scène* concentrates on what cannot be seen: literally entombed within his ship, the corpse-like Pericles becomes the hidden focus of attraction.⁶⁵ As a king who has "for this three months ... not spoken" (5.1.24), Pericles is something of a curiosity to Mytilene's governor Lysimachus, who desires to see him. It soon becomes clear, however, that the latter's presence has no restorative effect whatsoever: "bootless is your sight; he will not speak / To any" (5.1.32-3). Immersed in his grief, Pericles is dead to the world. The task, as Helicanus and Lysimachus see it, is to "make a batt'ry through his deafen'd ports" (5.1.45-6) and to "win some words of him" (5.1.42). A suitable job, it is soon agreed, for a woman like Marina.

Action comes to an almost total standstill while speech occupies centre stage in the climactic meeting between father and daughter. Recognition here is not achieved in the blink of an eye but is instead staged as a painstaking verbal process, the effect of a dialogue that takes the length of about 160 spoken lines, which makes it longer than most scenes in the play. The intricate unfolding of this exchange is unique to Shakespeare's dramatic adaptation of the Apollonius tale. In a scene in which, as Inga-Stina Ewbank notes, "Pericles begins as an

⁶⁴ It has become a critical commonplace that in early modern England theatregoers went to 'hear' a play, not to 'see' one, or, to put it in Donawerth's words: "When Elizabethan playwrights held the mirror up to nature, their mirror, like that in old fairy tales, was a speaking one" (14). That theatregoers nevertheless expected to be entertained visually is suggested by Ben Jonson's reprimand, articulated in the 'Prologue for the Stage' that opens his comedy *The Staple of News* (1625):

Would you were come to hear, not see a Play.
Though we his actors must provide for those
Who are our guests, here, in the way of shows,
The Maker hath not so; he'd have you wise,
Much rather by your ears, than by your eyes. (2-6)

Unless indicated otherwise, quotations from Ben Jonson's plays follow *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, 4 vols., edited by G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). For easier reference, the plays will be listed under their individual titles in the 'Works Cited' section.

⁶⁵ On the early modern stage Pericles in all probability would have been discovered lying in bed behind a curtain in the rear wall of the stage – the same curtained space, as Philip Edwards has pointed out, that was used to reveal Thaisa's dead body on board of the ship, or Marina's tomb (12). In more recent times productions have tended to literally stow Pericles away under a trapdoor (cf. Dessen and Thomson 70).

apathetic deaf-mute and ends up hearing the music of the spheres,” the power of the word is effectively demonstrated where it would perhaps be least expected (“My name” 115). This obvious dramatic and structural prominence calls for further enquiry. Why is speech so important, or, to put it in other words, the lack of speech so disturbing? To begin answering such a question, it may prove helpful to venture beyond the pale of *Pericles* for a moment to consider some early modern notions of language and voice that animate the (non-)speaking bodies in the play.

As the expression of reason, speech in humanist thought is the attribute that distinguishes man [sic!] from the animal (cf. Donawerth 5). In his treatise *On Education* (1531), Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist who tutored Queen Mary, posits that “For the exercise of social instinct, speech has been given to men, how otherwise could society exist, since our minds are hidden away in so dense a body? How completely dead and torpid would the mind be if it only found expression in the look of the eyes?” (qtd. in Donawerth 61-2). Man, as Ben Jonson insists, is only as good as his words: “No glasse renders a mans forme, or likenesse, so true as his speech” (*Timber* 625; 2033-35). As Jane Donawerth has illustrated in her study on *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-Century Study on Language* (1984), speech was not only considered to be the mirror of the (rational and civil) mind, it was also considered to be part of a vital physiological process that enabled the diseased or emotionally distressed body to purge itself from excess heat and superfluous humours (cf. 58). By refusing to speak, therefore, Pericles is not only risking a physical but also a social death, a decision that is lethal not only to himself but also to the well being of his kingdom.⁶⁶

But all is not yet lost: the person to engage him in a curing talk, or rather, a talking-cure is close at hand. Accomplished in performance and endowed with a “goodly presence” (5.1.65), Marina’s reformatory skills are required once more. This time, her ‘customer’ is to be Pericles, her task to “allure” (5.1.45) him to textual intercourse. Although the editors of the *Norton Shakespeare* (following the Oxford edition) put the First Quarto’s “allure” under erasure, replacing it instead with “alarum,” the sexual innuendo, as Arden editor Gossett maintains, may well have been intentional (cf. Gossett 372n38). It ties up with the general tenor of the dialogue between Lysimachus and Helicanus, the whole purpose of which is to emphasise that Marina is likely to be able to penetrate Pericles’ shield of silence with her “chosen attractions” (5.1.45). In the same manner, Lysimachus’ praise of Marina’s “sacred physis” (5.1.74) and her

⁶⁶ According to the political thought that began to emerge in the late Middle Ages, the monarch was endowed with two different bodies, the body natural and the body politic, that relate to each other. When Pericles loses his mind over his private grief, his subjects accordingly lose their political ‘head of state’. For the medieval political theology of the monarch’s ‘two bodies’ see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

“prosperous and artificial feat” (5.1.72) is generally glossed as referring to Marina’s medical skill in modern editions. Marina’s numerous talents are repeatedly remarked upon in the play, but medical skill, as far as I know, is not mentioned amongst them. Instead, Marina is praised for her ability to “sing, weave, sew, and dance” (4.6.183). Shakespeare’s Gower singles out her intellectual capability: “Deep clerks she dumbs” (5.Chorus.5). Not only does Marina therefore personify “the educated aristocratic lady of Renaissance humanism,” she is also, as Moore remarks, “the only young, unmarried Shakespearean female character to assume a functioning, self-supporting role outside a protected family environment, without the aid of a disguise” (41). Bearing in mind Marina’s ability to out-manoeuvre a whole brothel and its customers verbally, we can be sure that the dumbfounding impact she has on her surroundings is not to be explained by her visual appeal alone. Whereas in Gower’s ‘original’ version Marina is sent for because “She can so much of every thyng” (413), both Twine and Wilkins specifically refer to her powers of eloquence: in Twine, Marina has “wisdom, & can move pleasant talke” (463) while Wilkins emphasises her “Wisdom ... in perswasion” (452). Marina’s command of rhetoric is thus not only considered an important attribute, it is also characterised as being emotive.⁶⁷ In other words, it generates action, mental and physical, a notion inherent in the early modern understanding of language.

Generally defined as voiced sound (*vox*), as air that has been put into motion, speech in early modern England is basically regarded as a “physical process with material results” (Donawerth 16). When energised with significance through the sensible and rational arrangement of words into meaningful sentences (*oratio*), it has the power to move (in both senses of the word) (cf. Donawerth 19). In commanding voice and action, the verbal as well as the gestural delivery, the skilled rhetorician infuses language with the spirit of life. In his treatise *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham distinguishes between two basic qualities of what he calls “ornament poetical” (figurative language): “That first quality the Greeks called *enargeia*, of this word *argos*, because it giveth a glorious luster and light” (227). Its purpose is “to satisfy and delight the ear only by a goodly outward show set upon the matter with words and speeches smoothly and tunably running” (227). The second quality is referred to as “*energeia* of *ergon*, because it is wrought with a strong and virtuous operation” (227). While the former gives a more superficial gloss to the language, the latter infuses it with sense, “inwardly working a stir to the mind” of the listener (227). When they work together, these qualities achieve a sensation of what could perhaps be subsumed under the term *vitality*, a combination of vividness and force. As Margreta de Grazia observes, this “specifically

⁶⁷ The etymological root of *emotion* is the Latin term *movere*, to move. I will discuss the significance of this concept and its early modern equivalent, *passion*, in more detail in my analysis of the statue scene in *The Winter’s Tale*.

linguistic dynamic suggests the degree to which language in Shakespeare's age was considered a kind of physical resource with the potential to put human bodies in motion," to generate a living truth ("Shakespeare" 63). As I will aim to show, in the final act of *Pericles* language fulfils several different purposes: while the sexual overtones in the exchange between Helicanus and Lysimachus alert us to the potentially incestuous relation into which father and daughter are manoeuvred on stage— a final revival and revision of the primal scene of Antioch – the emphasis on the healing power of language connects with the theme of Pericles' loss: heirless and airless, his grief has literally taken his breath away.

When Pericles and Marina first lay eyes on each other, neither spectacle nor the harmony of music – stimulants that usually allow characters in Shakespeare's plays to achieve some kind of anagnorisis – strike home. What does strike Pericles, however, is Marina's verbal demeanour, the therapeutic mixture of unaffected style and literalness of speech that stands in contrast to his own curiously aphoristic way with words (cf. Dickey 554). Pericles' language, to draw on Ben Jonson's analogy between discourse and the human body, corresponds to a body which is "thinne, flagging, poore, starv'd, scarce covering the bone, and shewes like stones in a sack" (Timber 627; 2083-85); it lacks the vitality, the "blood, and juyce" of Marina's delivery which is "becoming, and signifying, and the sense gentle" (Timber 626; 2076, 2081-82). Marina's simple request to "lend ear" (5.1.80) in fact strikes home to such a degree that it prompts Pericles not only to retaliate with a first inarticulate grunt ("Hum, ha!" 5.1.83), but also – as the ensuing text suggests – with some form of violent gesture (cf. 5.1.100).⁶⁸ In the different co-texts of the play Pericles variously tries to smother Marina (cf. Gower 414), to strike her to the ground, causing her blood to gush "plentifully out of her cheeks" (Twine 466-67) or to hit her in the face, causing Marina to swoon (Wilkins 543). Since the degree and manner of violence is not specified in the text of *Pericles*, it is again left to the reader's imagination to fill this gap. In the 1984 BBC Television Shakespeare production of the play, the violence is toned-down to a series of physical rebuffs with which a deeply distrustful Pericles (Mike Gwilym) tries to ward off what he evidently believes to be a pesky impostor (Amanda Redman). Interestingly, the close-up and reaction shots used for this scene not only show how Pericles is increasingly overcome by the sensuality of Marina's tale-telling, they also involve the viewer in this exchange, effectively making him or her a voyeuristic accomplice to the father-daughter intimacy.

Unabashed by the violence of Pericles' reaction, Marina calmly rebukes his behaviour, declaring herself Pericles' equal not only in social position but also in the degree of her grief.

⁶⁸ A similar response marks (or mars) the recognition between husband and wife in *Cymbeline*, where Posthumus counters Innogen's attempt to reveal herself to him by striking her (though admittedly she is at this point still disguised as a Roman page).

She evidently manages to strike a chord or, to use a more satisfying somatic metaphor, hit a vital nerve in return. Pericles is roused to a first elliptical retort that echoes the keywords of their shared fate: “My fortunes – parentage – good parentage – / To equal mine – was it not thus? what say you?” (5.1.97-98). Set against the backdrop of a romance plot that verges on the improbable, Marina’s language, as Ewbank has pointed out, is infused with metaphoric relevance even as her metaphors turn out to be literally true (cf. “My name” 117). In other words, her language has such an impact because it “successfully mediates between the strange and the true, often by simply stating the impossible, as the truth which it is” (Ewbank, “My name” 118). Thus, when Pericles asks Marina whether she originates from “these shores” (5.1.102), Marina replies with a riddle-like answer that must nevertheless be interpreted literally to enable recognition to take place: “No, nor of any shore; / Yet I was mortally brought forth, and am / No other than I appear” (5.1.103-4). If not before, the listening audience should at this point experience an uncanny feeling of *déjà-vu*, or rather, *da capo*, since the device of the riddle has been notoriously employed before. The cryptic quality of Marina’s statement serves several purposes at once: as a linguistic device that demands decipherment, it functions as a narrative stimulant. As a positive foil for the regressive feeding of incest, Marina’s speech increases the appetite and thus provides the only possible nourishment to a ship “not destitute for want, / But weary for the staleness” (5.1.56-57). Next to music and verbal wit, Marina thus makes use of another device that, according to Agamemnon in *Troilus and Cressida*, characterises the truly entertaining speaker: “music, wit, and *oracle*” (1.3.74, my emphasis).⁶⁹ However, and perhaps most importantly, the oracular is the only linguistic form appropriate to the riddle of Marina’s existence. Marina is evidently aware of this when she points out that “If I should tell my history, ‘twould seem / Like lies, disdain’d in the reporting” (5.1.118-19). Portentous as its subject matter may be, the function of Marina’s tale is not to obscure but to reveal the essence of the matter. As a redemptive analogue to the Antiochian anti-riddle that is set down in disembodied print, Marina’s riddle is spoken by herself, a narrative embodied. Whereas the referent of the anti-riddle is the silenced daughter, who, in symbolic extension, becomes a mere cipher to the unspeakable sin of incest, Marina’s riddle contains her autobiography as encoded in her name. It is the articulation of this name that enables Pericles to notice Marina as father and not as suitor, a recognition that paves the way for the final reassertion of natural law (albeit in form of a supernatural figure).

Before such recognitions can take place, however, there are more senses that need reconciling: the life-denying spell of silence is only effectively broken when Pericles manages to

⁶⁹ The display of music, wit, and oracle characterise another group of figures with whom Marina has a lot in common: the enigmatic fools, such as Feste in *Twelfth Night* or the Fool in *King Lear*, who pinpoint their master’s or mistress’s tragic delusions through verbal witticisms.

fully integrate the verbal with the visual. While Marina’s verbal influence manifests itself in the way in which Pericles begins to tax her with a series of questions, interrogatives which, as Dickey has pointed out, are “really the first significant non-rhetorical questions Pericles asks in the play” (564), her gaze in a sense becomes his ‘corrective prism,’ a mirror that allows Pericles to see himself for the first time (“Pray you, turn your eyes upon me” [5.1.101]).⁷⁰ The effect of such an optical device is described by Pietro Accolti in his treatise on anamorphic images, *L’inganno de gl’occhi* (1625). Interestingly, Accolti’s assessment of the possibilities inherent in a decentred perspective reads like an oblique commentary on a play like *Pericles* in which, as Gorfain has put it, “the epistemological problem that knowledge may be no more than perception yields both doubt and celebration” (134):

... we are ... marvelously enchanted ... because ... we are unable to guess what the painter meant to represent ... unless we solve the enigma with the help of a mirror placed so we can direct our gaze at it (because the mirror shows something other than what we see with our eyes directly). We immediately recognise with astonishment that the picture is usually a portrait of people who are known and very dear to us – such is the strength, value, and power of perspective, in which everything entirely depends on appearances. (Accolti qtd. in Gilman 39)

Moved by Marina’s evident physical resemblance to his wife, Pericles is finally able to give expression to his grief – “I am great with woe/ And shall deliver weeping” (5.1.105-6) – and thus also to air it, in a poetical description of the likeness:

... My dearest wife
Was like this maid
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. (5.1.106-13)

Unwittingly, he comes near the heart of the mystery when he conflates Marina and his wife linguistically, working his way from the past to the present tense.

In her essay on the verbal structure of recognition in this scene, Ewbank has brilliantly shown how Pericles’ discovery of Marina requires him to overcome the fictional security of his emblematic metaphors (cf. “My name” 120). This transformation, I believe, is anticipated in

⁷⁰ Also, notice the significant reversal: Marina, who hitherto “ne’er invited eyes / But have been gaz’d on like a comet” (5.1.85-6) is required to actively direct her ‘gaze’ on an/other. In this context it is also interesting to note that in his lectures on the dialectic between the eye and the gaze, Lacan uses the reference to anamorphosis to propose the “primal separation” that founds subjectivity: the subject’s eye/I is always “caught, manipulated, captured” in the field of vision that precedes it (qtd. in Diamond 152). In this way, the subject never recognises itself except through the gaze of the other (cf. Diamond 152).

his final allegorical description of Marina, a description that significantly contributes another variation on the statue-theme in the play:

... yet thou dost look
Like Patience gazing on kings' graves, and smiling
Extremity out of act. (5.1.137-39)

Time is suspended in this monumental metaphor in which an evanescent smile triumphs over the stony evidence of death, a phenomen(ologic)al moment which Shakespeare explores in greater depth in *The Winter's Tale*. The impossible reality of Marina's sensual presence can only be grasped in this "rarest dream" (5.1.161), on the threshold between knowledge and imagination, which allows for a momentary suspension of disbelief:

I will believe thee,
And make my senses credit thy relation
To points that seem impossible; for thou look'st
Like one I lov'd indeed (5.1.122-24)

Finite voice is eventually favoured over the infinite sign when Pericles declares that he is ready to "believe you [Marina] by the syllable / Of what you shall deliver" (5.1.167-68). Marina's tale is also Pericles' tale, its telling recovers their common origin. As DelVecchio and Hammond have pointed out, their "exchanges are shaped and enhanced continually by a lexicon of narrative" that revolves around telling, reporting, saying, delivering, and speaking (33). Speech promises delivery in more than one sense. Verbal relief is accompanied by the delivery of tears that reconnect the circumstances of Marina's watery birth to Pericles' own joyful and painful deliverance:

Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
And drown me with their sweetness. (5.1.191-94)

In the belly of the ship, therefore, the father-daughter intimacy turns out to be (re)creative, something that Pericles acknowledges when he calls out the answer to Marina's riddle:

O, come hither,
Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget;
Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tharsus,
And found at sea again.
...: this is Marina. (5.1.194-99)

It is a restoration that is significantly achieved through both the telling of and listening to stories. The verbal structure of the climactic paradox connects the literal with the metaphorical,

the act of giving birth with the telling of a tale, thus matching natural and cultural (pro)creation, something that is particularly apt for a play in which the restoration of an ancient tale ‘told for restoratives’ goes hand in hand with the restoration of a real-life medieval poet on the fictive realm of the early modern stage, an issue to which I will return presently.

Whereas familial involution in the hermetic court of Antioch gave rise to verbal atrophy, the discovery of a common origin in this scene turns out to be vital for the recovery of meaningful speech, an ideal language that, in Eagleton’s terms, is “at once metaphorically transformative and sensuously precise” (102). At the moment of recognition, the tragic plot is reiterated only to be revised in and through the very act of speaking. The paradox of begetting again conjures up the paradox of Christianity (Mary’s dual role as daughter and bride of God the Father) that was parodied in the Antiochian riddle, but the emphasis this time is on salvation and restoration.⁷¹ Intimacy here is not gained at the cost of bodily integrity nor by eradicating maternity. And as if to make sure it never will, the virginal goddess that has been evoked both by mother and daughter in the play intervenes. Pericles’ desiring eyes, the ‘eyes that presumed to reach,’ have become half-closed with “thick slumber” (5.1.232), something that allows him to hear the “music of the spheres” (5.1.227) and to get a glimpse of the divine instead. With father and daughter happily united, all could be well, but Gower’s restorative tale has not yet ‘untold’ itself: the end of Pericles’ travels is not yet in sight/site.

2.6 Incarnate Delivery

Will you deliver
How this dead queen re-lives?
(*Per.* 5.3.63-4)

Restoration in *Pericles* is thus triggered by the recovery of the ‘right’ story as embodied by Marina and her telltale name. However, the act of giving breath and giving birth in this play seems to require not only the presence of an author/father, but also the authoritative/mother.⁷² When Pericles re-stories the events of the play up to the moment of recognition, he not only restores his identity as father and king (“I am Pericles of Tyre” [5.1.204]), but also as husband, something that allows for the reintroduction of wife and

⁷¹ See also Elizabeth Archibald’s comments on the use of Marian rhetoric and its relation to medieval stories of incest in her book on *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001) 238-44.

⁷² Interestingly, although in Aristotelian thought a woman’s role in the production of issue was to submit their womb to the forming and shaping power of the male, the commoner view adopted in seventeenth century England was based on the Galenic model where conception requires discharge of male as well as female seed (cf. Keeble 19).

mother: “tell me now / My drown’d queen’s name” (5.1.205). Repeatedly naming Thaisa at the end of the recognition scene, Marina not only reinstates the mother-figure that was excised from the initial riddle as it was from the greater part of the play, but also recapitulates their complex relation in the larger structure of the play: “Thaisa was my mother who did end the minute I began” (5.1.210-11).⁷³ Everything is set for the final showdown, ‘natural’ delivery is assured by the dramatic incarnation of the presiding female deity of the play, Diana, goddess of chastity and childbirth, guardian of women and symbol of nature (Kiefer 219).⁷⁴ On stage, the theophany gives scope for a spectacular *coup de théâtre*. Although the text does not specify the manner of Diana’s entrance, it is probable that the actor playing Diana would have been seen descending from the ‘heavens,’ a trapdoor in the canopied roof above the stage (cf. Gossett, *Pericles* 81). Without much ado, this *dea ex machina* instructs Pericles on the best course of action: “To mourn thy crosses ... give them repetition to the life.... perform my bidding, or thou liv’st in woe; / Do’t, and be happy” (5.1.243-46). Again, there is the suggestion that speech has a cathartic effect, an effect that is significantly located in the power of the (repeatedly) performed re(ve)lation. It is to be a repetition with a difference, however. In order to restore, Pericles’ tale (just like Gower’s) needs to be re-storied in as life-like a manner as possible: in the immediacy of dramatic action.

Spurred by this forceful dramatic intervention, Pericles in rapid succession consigns his daughter (now audibly silent) to Lysimachus, finds his way to Ephesus, and recounts his story in the sanctified and public space of Diana’s temple, at which point the forward motion of events is put to a halt once more. The contrary impulses of romance, “its quest for, and simultaneous distancing of, an end or presence,” something that Patricia Parker has so convincingly ‘dilated’ on in her study on *Inescapable Romance* (1979), are clearly made manifest in *Pericles*, a play which is propelled by the sabotage of closure: courtships are aborted or delayed, travellers seldom reach their intended destination, bodies are displaced or cast away, actions that seemed unstoppable are miraculously prevented, while things that were never deemed possible actually occur (226). When action comes to a standstill, it is narrative desire that is variously denied (Marina, who “never would tell / Her parentage” [5.1.187-88]), forestalled (Helicanus, who is prevented from recounting the story of Pericles’ grief by the entry of Marina: “But see, I am prevented” [5.1.63]), or interrupted (Gower’s comments and dumb

⁷³ A statement that is full of dramatic irony if, as has become common practice in more recent productions of the play, Thaisa and Marina are played by the same actress. The double casting stresses the overtones of incest that pervade the play and thus problematises the ‘happy family’ reunion at the end.

⁷⁴ Diana is invoked about fifteen times in the course of the play. For an interesting analysis of the importance of Diana’s presence for the relationship between art and nature in the play see Frederick Kiefer’s essay on “Art, Nature, and Language in *Pericles*” in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61 (1991/2) 207-225, esp. 219-20.

shows). “Story-telling,” as Bishop has put it, “is everywhere in *Pericles*” (94). And yet it is ultimately deferred from one scene to another, from one storyteller to the next, a deferral that persists beyond the play’s ending. The final scene therefore intrudes on the progress towards narrative closure by a seemingly superfluous theatrical re-enactment of recognition, a re-enactment that creates a performative space apart from the succession of the plot. In this space, the visual impact of the scene becomes paramount. The forbidden sight/site that had tormented Pericles at the beginning of the play is restaged only to be re-evaluated: this time it is Thaisa’s actively desiring eye, the eye that ‘presumes to reach,’ that uncovers truth and completes the lawful family reunion, allowing Pericles’ “sore eyes” (1.1.100), eyes that have learned to shun pleasures, to heal through the sensual contemplation of her spectacular presence.

Thaisa’s exclamation of wonder upon identifying her lost husband not only resounds Pericles’ previous anagnorisis but also thematises a contest between knowledge and its refusal which, as I tried to show, is at the heart of the dynamic of the play:

O, let me look!
 If he be none of mine, my sanctity
 Will to my sense curb no licentious ear,
 But curb it, spite of seeing. O, my lord,
 Are you not Pericles? Like him you spake,
 Like him you are. Did you not name a tempest,
 A birth and a death? (5.3.28-34)

Here the desire for signification, the desire to know, is set against the seductive immediacy of sensual apprehension, something that is articulated even more clearly in Pericles’ request that “on the touching of her lips I may / Melt and no more be seen” (5.3.43). The primacy of the present fulfilment is here established over knowledge of the past, just as the dramatic experience is established over narrative desire. It is an extremely fragile moment, as Bishop has observed: “In the final reunions of *Pericles*, the tangibility of recovery stands in delicate balance with the bare sufficiency of time and flesh to hold the visible shape of a narrative embodied” (94). Linear time is momentarily suspended when the expansive plot of the play is condensed into what Patricia Parker has called “the cartography of a single moment” where, as in the extended space of Renaissance paintings, “the whole plot is revealed at once” (*Inescapable* 35).⁷⁵ The logic of linear sequence is confounded by the paradoxical rebirth of a dead queen: “Will you deliver / How this dead queen re-lives?” (5.3.63-64). It is a paradox that is framed by the

⁷⁵ A remarkable example of such a painting can be found in the National Gallery of London. It is a narrative portrait of Sir Henry Unton, a soldier and diplomat. Painted by an unknown artist c. 1596, it was commissioned as a posthumous commemoration by Unton’s widow. It depicts a portrait of Unton surrounded by selected scenes from his life, from his birth to his death.

similarly anachronistic presence of Gower as narrator. The play, however, delays the need for further explanation long enough to let performance dominate the desire to know: “we do our longing stay / To hear the rest untold” (5.3.83-84).

Although the anticlimactic effect of the double recognition scene has been stressed by several critics, I agree with the New Cambridge editors DeVecchio and Hammond who argue that the visual recognition in this scene builds on the narrative insights gained in the last, only to top them both with a “redefinition of death and resurrection on a different and more immediate theatrical level” (75). This instance also suggests why, as several critics have noted, *Pericles* works so well in performance. The effect of wonder is not likely to communicate itself to the reader of this play who is presented with a spoiler in form of an interpolated stage direction clarifying that Thaisa merely faints when she recognises her husband.⁷⁶ It is the bodily re-enactment of the incredible that compels belief, for, as Pericles has put it, “truth can never be confirm’d enough” (5.1.201). And yet what is the exact nature of this truth that seems to require so much confirmation?

In the concentrated space of eighty-four lines, ‘natural’ order is created through re-enactment: incest, the initial catalyst of action, is evoked only to be dispelled by the re-instatement of legitimate familial bonds. When Pericles is eventually reunited with Thaisa, the triumph of ‘natural’ patriarchy is pitted against the undesirable incestuous union, the rule of ‘unnatural’ tyranny that unleashed the painful adventures in the first place. Diana’s temple in many ways provides the appropriate site in which to stage such a restoration: as Jordan has argued, Diana’s presence “testifies to the link between chastity and fecundity in the work of generation ... free from associations with an incestuous and anarchic sexuality” (*Shakespeare’s* 61).⁷⁷ In her territory, natural cyclic rhythms prevail. Eternal unity, as Gorfain has pointed out, is symbolised by the circularity of the ring on Pericles’ finger (cf. 139). Given to him by Thaisa’s father, it is the final confirmatory token of a mutual bond: “This, this, no more” (5.3.40) Pericles exclaims when Thaisa identifies its story. The play has come full circle to “the womb that their first being bred” (1.1.108), a return to lawful origin and to a reunification that in the course of the play has become both legitimate and necessary because it involves the validation of distinct social identities. When Pericles asks Thaisa to “be buried / A second time within these arms” (5.3.43-44), he evokes the medieval Christian notion of *unitas carnis*: joined

⁷⁶ Again, it should be pointed out that this stage direction is not present in the Quarto text. It was originally added by Nicholas Rowe in his 1709 edition of *The Works of Mr. William Shakespeare* [sic], and has since been included in modern editions of the play (cf. Hoeniger 158n14).

⁷⁷ In her reading of *Pericles*, Adelman goes one step further by arguing that what is celebrated as ‘proper’ in the end, is “the recuperation of the family, freed from the sexual body” (198). While I find her argument persuasive, I believe that what is exorcised is not so much sexuality of any sort, but sexuality that does not contribute to a patriarchal economy of increase.

in marriage, man and wife become one flesh. The authority usually cited in support of this concept was Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (qtd. in Aughterson 11). The reintegration of the family that was violently torn apart at sea is thus troped as the reintegration of one body that encompasses distinct parts, a corporate entity that includes Marina, chaste daughter of a chaste mother who, Pericles informs Thaisa, is “flesh of thy flesh” (5.3.46). When Marina responds to this citation from Genesis (2:23) with a complementary image from a more poetical context, declaring that her “heart / Leaps to be gone into my mother’s bosom” (5.3.44-5), she also “rehearses romance’s favourite trope, the umbilical return which can banish all corruption and ensure all safety” (Palfrey 212). As Palfrey points out, however, the union is not only foetal and familial but also political (cf. 212).⁷⁸ The events at Ephesus demonstrate the restoration of an organic society, of a body politic in which the purged head sustains the purified body and vice versa, an image very much propagated by Stuart ideology.

In her study on medieval subjectivity Claire Sponsler draws attention to the fact that “the idea of the king’s (healthy) body as a symbol of divine and social order” and the “notion of the urban polity as a mutually beneficial body corporate” was not a new one: in the late Middle Ages the image of healthy corporeality as a model for an exemplary community was already commonly used (138). Interestingly, in his study of the *Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (1971), David George Hale maintains that the origin of this analogy between the body and society was thought to derive from Periclean Athens (c. 495 – 429 BC), at a time when the Athenian *polis* achieved an extraordinary amount of unity and thus developed an organic analogy to express this civil life (cf. 16, 18). In a more immediately topical sense, *Pericles* was conceived at a time when the self-proclaimed king of ‘Great Britain’ promoted himself primarily as a peacemaker who sought to harmonise differences both within his domestic and his foreign policies. Even though his early political writings, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilikon Doron* (both written in 1598), advocate an absolute style of kingship, King James I repeatedly emphasised that unity and union with his subjects was to be desired above everything else. This is reflected not only in his use of the traditional analogies of king as head and subjects as body, but also in his repeated pleas to secure a formal union between the two kingdoms, England and Scotland, a union, he argued in his “Speech to parliament 19 March 1603,” already “made in my blood” (*King* 135).⁷⁹ It was, after all, his

⁷⁸ For a reading of Shakespeare’s romances as political drama see also Constance Jordan’s *Shakespeare’s Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997).

⁷⁹ Citations of King James’ speeches to parliament are taken from Johann P. Sommerville’s *King James VI and I: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) and will not be listed separately in the ‘Works Cited’ section, unless indicated otherwise.

success in re-establishing the royal lineage that recommended James to his English subjects, encouraging a tendency in Stuart Britain “to magnify the importance of royal blood and its biological transmission as a mystical source of legitimacy and civic peace,” a theme that receives considerable emphasis in *Cymbeline* (Smuts 273). Kinship secured kingship and as Bruce Thomas Boehrer has suggested, the Scottish heir apparent fortified his claim to the English throne by repeatedly invoking “multivalent, arguably incestuous kinship ties to compensate for his position as eternal outsider,” constructing himself as loving brother, son and cousin to the English queen (16).⁸⁰

Like Elizabeth before him, James liked to stress the fact that the sovereign is a singular ‘meta-physiological’ figure possessed of a hybrid sexual and social identity. Unlike his childless predecessor, however, whose mythologising had centred on virgin goddesses, James, who came to the English throne already equipped with royal progeny, liked to fashion himself as a “loving nourish-father” to his subjects, maternally providing the commonwealth with “their very nourish-milke” – much like Pericles, in fact, who feeds the starving citizens of Tharsus with his corn (*Basilikon* 27, 28). Literally and figuratively taking a dead queen’s place, James I conceived himself as the head of a single-parent family in his inaugural speech to his first English parliament in 1604: “I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body” (*King* 136). Perhaps even more explicitly so than in *Pericles*, the capability to restore a corporate entity in James’ speech seems to depend on the man’s capacity to incorporate the woman’s part.

While in *Pericles* the self-referential and thus ultimately self-defeating incestuous union of Antiochus represents “the ultimate anti-romance, killing all futures, neutering hopes for transformation,” continuity is shown to persist in the holy surroundings of Ephesus where kingly, paternal, maternal and virginal bodies are joined in a sensuous embrace that literally and metaphorically generates a future of dynastic integrity (Palfrey 58): Marina is the “heir of kingdoms,” thereby bestowing “another life to Pericles thy father” (5.1.207, 208). Although the couple’s future is left untold, the consistent matching of the act of birth with the telling of stories in the play anticipates more than just a symbolic delivery, something that is made explicit in all the literary co(n)texts of the tale. Thus, in the Latin prose version of late antiquity, the *Historia Apollonii*, Apollonius in the end inherits the throne of which he is the lawful heir and begets a son (cf. Archibald, *Apollonius* 94). Both factors are enlarged upon in varying detail in successive versions, most explicitly so in Wilkins’ *Painful Adventures*. Wilkins here goes to

⁸⁰ Ample evidence of this is given in John Bruce’s edition of the *Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland* (London, 1849). In the 1580s the Scottish king evidently liked to sign his letters with “Your most louing and deuoted brother and sonn” and “Your trewest and assured brother and cousin” while Elizabeth tends to reply as “most assured louing sister and cousin” only (qtd. in Bruce 22, 25, 39).

some lengths to inform the reader that Pericles, having sorted all his 'sovereign' affairs, is blessed with a son, young Simonides, who eventually inherits the kingdoms of Antioch and Pentapolis while Tyrus is ruled by Marina's issue (cf. 546).

Even though Pericles' growing beard must eventually be "clip[ed] to form" (5.3.74) just as Gower needs to come up with a moralistic finish for his vagrant fairy-tale, such trimming, the play implies, is inevitably exercised at the cost of dramatic presence. When his last lines are spoken, Gower must return to the ashes from which he came. In a play that from the beginning deconstructs the very idea of an authoritative or an authorised story both in form and content, the assumption of closure is as misleading as Dionyza's glittering monument. As meta-authorial presence, Gower is the guarantor of an ending but the story he concludes is ultimately only his own: "New joy wait on you! Here *our* play has ending" (Epilogue.18, my emphasis). Through his 'death,' Gower, just like all the other major storytellers within and beyond the play, makes possible a 'repetition to the life' (cf. 5.1.244) since in *Pericles*, to quote Bishop, "the potential immortality of narrative depends upon the medium of perishable bodies" (122). In this way, the dramatised version also distinguishes itself from its literary predecessors and their expressed insistence on and concern with faithful representation. Both Twine and Gower conclude their particular versions with assurances of (authoritative) textual preservation. In Twine's version we are told that once his affaires were settled, "he [Apollonius] applied his vacant time to his booke, and hee wrote the whole storie and discourse of his own life and adventures at large, the which he caused to be written foorth in two large volumes, whereof he sent one to the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, and placed the other in his owne library. Of which historie this is but a small abstract, promising if ever the whole chance to come into my hands, to set it forth with all fidelitie, diligence, and expedition" (481). John Gower in turn concludes his poem with the remark that such an exemplary biography could not but be recorded for posterity: "And in ensample his life was writte, / That all lovers mighten witte / Howe at last it shall be seen / Of love what thei wolden mene" (422). The wide variety of editions of *Pericles* that exist today seem to corroborate this truism in another sense: left with only 'bad' copies of the play extant, the quarto editions from which some lines of text have perished and others have been identified as being corrupt, some editors of the play, such as the editors for the Oxford and the Norton Shakespeare, have opted to 'graft flesh on a living body' (to invoke Knight once again) by incorporating the "verse fossils" of Wilkins' tale into what is perceived as the mutilated body of the 'original' manuscript (Warren 208). Directors of the play have followed suit with the result that the end-product performed on stage is indeed a 'mouldy tale,' a medley of donated scraps of text, assembled according to continuously changing criteria of authenticity and/or performability (cf. Warren

215). Each time the curtain falls on a performance of *Pericles*, therefore, this particular narrative will cease to be bodied forth. The protean body of romantic texts, however, will stay behind, promising ‘new joy’ and new incarnations with every new performance.

2.7 Steering towards a Conclusion

But when the cracker bursts it proves as you supposed
Trinket and moral tumble out just so.
(Louis MacNeice 17-18)

In the end, the play has moved a long way from the emblematic “theatre of deadly paralysis” in the first scene where Antiochus’ coercive power-play keeps the desiring eye in eternal awe while speech is subjected to a contrived rhetorical environment in which language is “opaque, parabolic, has its own interior” (Bishop 96, 99). As I have tried to show, the destructive dynamic of this spectacle is materialised in the bodily remains of failed suitors: in a realm ruled by the deadlocked “logic of repetitive violence,” Antiochus is master of a stage on which only “dumbness and dismemberment” can prevail (Bishop 98). Pericles’ fall from innocence is effected through his introduction to the wor(l)d of Antiochus’ law set down in a text whose decipherment precipitates the discovery not only of a gap between sign and referent but also of *différance*, the difference and deference between signifier and signified: once the fair face of Antiochus’ daughter is conceived as a set of graphic signifiers, a “book of praises, where is read / *Nothing* but curious pleasures” (1.1.15-16, my emphasis), it becomes subject to the same hermeneutics that were applied to the riddle and must accordingly be reinterpreted as *full* of ‘curious pleasure,’ a “casket stor’d with ill” (1.1.78). Such corporeal knowledge at first proves to be bodily inhibiting and mentally overwhelming, drawing “sleep out of mine eyes, blood from my cheeks, / Musings into my mind, with thousand doubts / How I might stop this tempest ere it came” (1.2.96-98). Radical doubt about the reliability of perception and its physical mediators, the eye and the ear, wreaks havoc in the play. *Pericles*, together with its title-hero, is literally lost in a sea of uncertain meanings. The repetitive dramaturgy, the post-traumatic restagings of the opening scene, the episodic plot, the statues and animated corpses that spawn the play might be understood as symptoms of an ongoing dramatic struggle with the implications of such knowledge (cf. Bishop 101).

It is a struggle that is paralleled on a metapoetic level: standing at the interstices of stage and page, Gower’s interventions voice a similar concern not only with the transmission but also with the reception of his tale: his faith in the ‘judgement of the eye’ (cf. 1.Chorus.41) and the explanatory power of the dumb-show (“what need speak I?” [2.Chorus.16]) is gradually called

into question by a growing awareness that showing and telling might not coincide, that the body on display may convey something to the audience “Which might not what by me is told” (3.Chorus.57). At the beginning of Act three, Gower invokes ‘performance’ (the unfolding of the play), ‘action’ (theatrical performance) and ‘imagination’ (the mental participation of the audience) as the means that works independently of his narrative interference to bring his story alive on the stage:

And what ensues in this fell storm
Shall for itself itself *perform*,
I will relate, *action* may
Conveniently the rest convey;
Which might not what by me is told.
In your *imagination* hold
This stage the ship, upon whose deck
The sea-tost Pericles appears to speak.
(3.Chorus.53-60, my emphasis)

Once set in motion, he seems to be saying, theatrical enactment, enhanced by the imagination of the audience, speaks for itself. But since his ensuing tale encompasses a childbirth at sea, the reanimation of an encoffined body, and a time-span of approximately fourteen years, limits are tested not only of what can possibly be represented but also be imagined, and Gower needs to rely more heavily on the audience’s imaginative faith at the beginning of act four (“my rime; / Which never could I so convey, / Unless your thoughts went on my way” [4.Chorus.48-50]). The strain begins to show when he implores the audience to “learn of me, who stand i’th’ gaps to teach you / The stages of our story” (4.4.7-9). The ‘stages’ are both temporal and spatial and so are the ‘gaps’ that Gower needs to bridge with the unsophisticated dramaturgical devices at his disposal: choric intrusions and dumb shows. But it is only in the last of these dumb shows near the end of act four, the scene in which Marina’s monument is discovered, that Gower formulates this tension in two audaciously metatheatrical lines: “See how belief may suffer by foul show! / This borrow’d passion stands for true-ow’d woe” (4.4.23-24). For a moment, disillusion prevails: Gower reminds us that he is not offering us the ‘real thing’ – his play is merely a stand-in, a crude theatrical substitute that emphasises rather than smoothes out the discrepancy between the signifying performance and the signified reality. And yet the dramatic immediacy of the ‘borrowed passion’ is able to create the effect of authenticity, the gestures of grief move Pericles just as the audience is moved by the physical presence of the actors on stage. In the visual tableau of the dumb show the acting body is brought to the fore, complicating in its opacity the seemingly transparent transactions between narrative meaning and theatrical performance. As if realising for the first time that the performing body may not merely reproduce the intended meaning, Gower is quick to belittle the actors of the dumb-

show to mere “motes and shadows” (4.4.21) which, in order to achieve significance, require verbal contextualisation (“Your ears unto your eyes I’ll reconcile” [4.4.22]).⁸¹ Although the moral interpretation is held in check by Gower’s more frequent authorial intrusions, he becomes noticeably more dependent on the imaginative collaboration of the audience to make up for the resulting lack of immediacy.

The evolving tension between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’ is taken to a whole new level in the only television adaptation of the play, directed by David Jones for the BBC Television series in 1984. Even though Jones makes use of the medium’s capacity to “integrate spoken narrative with the visual representation” (Nelsen 307), thus enabling the spectator to see rather than have to imagine the story acted out as Gower tells it, he is careful not to let the spectator lose sight of Gower’s function as retrograde storyteller. Instead of using jump cuts to effect a quick change of locales, for example, Jones, as Paul Nelsen has pointed out in his detailed analysis of the production, employs extended cross fades to allow the image of the narrating Gower to dissolve into a translucent “ghost image” that is superimposed on the establishing shots of the various sites of the story (cf. 308). Able to re- or de-materialise at will, to become part of the action, to supervise it as ghostly presence or to direct as disembodied voice, Jones’s Gower may well aim to represent the filmic apotheosis of an omniscient narrator, but even on television high visibility does not automatically equate to sole authority. Storytelling spills over from Gower’s hands when his recitation of the inscription on Marina’s monument in 4.4 is taken over by Dionyza’s voice in an audio cross-fade that audibly, at least, establishes a different, more immediate authorial provenance. On the theatrical stage, the fictional illusion of presence can only be maintained by the mental action of the audience in the shared theatrical space. In the end, it is such imaginative faith that ‘holds the stage’ (cf. 3.Chorus.58-59) for Gower’s restorative tale-telling, transforming the “quaint fairy tale” into the sensual immediacy of the dramatic experience (DeVecchio and Hammond 30).

What we witness therefore in *Pericles* is not only a series of literal but also of literary metamorphoses. It is the frequent conjunction of body and language, of giving birth and telling a tale that makes it possible for DeVecchio and Hammond to argue that what Shakespeare dramatises in this play is “*the storytelling process itself*” (8, emphasis in original). Like the intermediary figure of Gower, who functions both as narrative device and embodied presence, *Pericles* is a tightly knit fabric made up of juxtaposition of material and symbolic elements, a dramatic romance, or, to invoke Ben Jonson once again, a ‘mouldy tale,’ that will remain prone to all kinds of textual and bodily transformations.

⁸¹ In Thacker’s 1989 production for the Swan Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, Rudolph Walker’s Gower was clearly marked as such an authorial figure: permanently on-stage, book in hand, this Gower was always ready to tell the audience what and how to imagine.

3 “Amazed with matter” – *The Winter’s Tale*

The Winter’s Tale, composed sometime between 1609-1611 and first published from a remarkably error-free printer’s copy in the 1623 First Folio as comedy, begins inconspicuously enough.⁸² Its title suggests a proverbial kinship with “idle tales” (“Winter Tale”), implausible fables to be told, in the words of Shakespeare’s King Richard II, “In winter’s tedious nights ... by the fire / With good old folks” (5.2.40-41). It is this connotation and, as with *Pericles*, its narrative debt to prose romance, that appears to have guaranteed the play’s initial success on stage just as it has marred its subsequent critical appreciation. This time the principle narrative ‘substrate’ is derived from a contemporary pastoral romance, Robert Greene’s *Pandosto, or The Triumph of Time* (1588). A classical hit in its own right, it was continuously reprinted through the seventeenth century, and survived in a chapbook adaptation well into the nineteenth century. Today, Greene’s romance sees republication mainly as ‘source’ in the appendix to scholarly editions of Shakespeare’s play.⁸³ With a prolific output of prose and stage works, Greene, as Newcomb has pointed out, was England’s first celebrity author and foremost romance writer in England in the 1580s (cf. Newcomb, “Greene” n. pag.). In an ironic historical reversal, today Greene is mainly known for his notorious invective against the plagiaristic reworkings by a rival hack – possibly the first contemporary reference to Shakespeare:

... there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. (qtd. in Newcomb, “Greene,” n. pag.)⁸⁴

Such dramatic pilfering seems to have paid off: Simon Forman – astrologer, occultist and quack doctor – who saw *The Winter’s Tale* at the Globe on 15 May 1611, finds it commendable mainly for its pastoral portrayal of cozenage as embodied in the figure of the comic rogue Autolycus (arguably a homage to Greene’s persona as lascivious pamphleteer) and for the lessons to be learned from “trusting feigned beggars or fawning fellows,” a topic otherwise

⁸² For an overview of the different kinds of conflicting evidence put forward to date the play see the appendix in the New Variorum Edition of *The Winter’s Tale*, ed. Robert Kean Turner et al. (New York: MLA, 2005), esp. 602-615.

⁸³ In her book-length study on the changing fortunes of Greene’s work, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (2002), Newcomb gives a detailed account of the longevity of this best seller in seventeenth-century fiction and discusses how changing attitudes towards ‘re-commodification’ of literary material shaped the transformation of both *Pandosto* and that of its dramatic ‘successor’.

⁸⁴ As this passage is part of the posthumously published pamphlet *Greene’s Groats-Worth of Witte* (1592), this work is now mainly attributed to Henry Chettle, who ‘prepared’ the manuscript for publication (cf. Newcomb, “Greene” n. pag.).

covered by cheap chapbooks of the time, such as Greene's 1591-1592 series of coney-catching pamphlets (Rowse 307). In 1611, besides being performed at the Globe, *The Winter's Tale* was also staged at Whitehall before King James, with whom it must have found some favour since it was subsequently selected as one of fourteen plays to be performed for his newly engaged daughter Elizabeth Stuart and her fiancé the Elector Palatine in 1613. Court records suggest that the play continued to be in repertoire up until 1633, when it was performed by the King's Players before Charles I and "likt" (qtd. in Chambers, *William* 352).⁸⁵

With its audacious mix of kings and clowns, animate statues and animated bears, and a sixteen-year gap in the action that is winged along by Father Time, the play's manifold investments in popular literature did not earn it any approval from rival playwright Ben Jonson. In the induction to Jonson's city comedy *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), the Scrivener warns his audience not to expect any such entertainment: "loth to make Nature afraid" (113-14), Jonson has no use for a "servant-monster" (112) nor "a nest of antics" (113) in his own dramatic writings, clearly championing realism and formal control against what he perceived to be the ramshackle eclecticism of "those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels, let the concupiscence of jigs and dances reign as strong as it will amongst you" (114-17).⁸⁶ According to Newcomb, this estimation of the play did not change significantly during the Restoration when Shakespeare scholars were "faced with the dual problem of assimilating *The Winter's Tale*, so unapt to neoclassical tastes, into the Shakespeare canon, and of disassociating the play from *Pandosto*, still embarrassingly available in cheap editions" (*Reading* 2). Thus, John Dryden, reflecting on the achievements of his dramatic predecessors Shakespeare and Fletcher in 1672, laments "the lameness of their Plots: many of which ... were made up of some ridiculous, incoherent story, which, in one Play many times took up the business of an Age" (206). Two plays are singled out for being especially guilty of this:

I suppose I need not name *Pericles Prince of Tyre*.... Besides many of the rest, as the [sic] *Winter's Tale* ... which were either grounded on impossibilities or at least, so meanly written, that the Comedy neither caus'd your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment. (Dryden 206)

⁸⁵ For a comprehensive account of the stage history of *The Winter's Tale* see Dennis Bartholomeusz, *The Winter's Tale in Performance in England and America, 1611-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

⁸⁶ With its obvious allusions to *The Tempest* (Caliban) and *The Winter's Tale* (the dance of satyrs), Jonson's remark is arguably the first and only contemporary reference to the plays' romantic connection. Until Edward Dowden in 1875 famously identified a certain "romantic element" in *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* (in 1877 he added *Pericles*) and grouped them together as "Romances," no explicit connections had been made between these plays either generically or chronologically (55, 57).

When Shakespeare's play resurfaced on the English stage after a moratorium of more than one hundred years, it had been relieved of its tragic 'appendage' in favour of its comic 'heart,' the bucolic sheep-shearing scene of act four, one of the few instances in which Shakespeare digresses from his narrative source. David Garrick's three-act adaptation published as *Florizel and Perdita, a Dramatic Pastoral* (1758) found favour not only with its audience – it was staged over sixty times to huge popular acclaim between 1756 and 1795 – but also with the critics. For the eighteenth-century literary critic and clergyman William Warburton, Garrick's 'reformed' version of *The Winter's Tale* had succeeded in giving "elegant form to a monstrous composition" (qtd. in Bartholomeusz 37). Even though the full text was gradually recovered in the nineteenth century, the play's "governing aesthetic of multiplicity," its tragi-comic contrivance, was only fully embraced at the dawn of the modern age (Snyder and Curren-Aquino 2). Accordingly, Granville-Barker's virtually uncut production at the Savoy in 1912 prompted the review headline: "Startling discovery at the Savoy: Shakespeare alive!" (qtd. in Pitcher 112).

Ostentatiously polar, both in its solstitial title and in its glaring generic as well as generational split, I want to approach *The Winter's Tale* from a historically informed close reading of the perceptual divide that opens the play's (t)issue. Haunted by eyes, tongues, and hands – body members that wander astray in the winter of Leontes' discontent – *The Winter's Tale*, I would like to argue, re-opens a case that was considered closed at the end of *Pericles* and re-examines it from a different perspective. Although similarly furnished with the stigmata of romance, the focus has shifted: whereas *Pericles'* travails are structured around a series of recognitions, misrecognition is what 'moves' the tragicomic romance that was conceived only a few years later.⁸⁷ Where *Pericles* uses the metaphor of birth to celebrate the (pro)creative powers of an embodied language, the very same imagery problematises the possibility of a union between body and language in the two different halves of *The Winter's Tale*. From the beginning of the play, to borrow Eagleton's words, "the solid, unified entity we call a body is fissured, rendered non-identical with itself, by the language which is its very breath" (97). In the following, I would like to examine what role the physical body assumes in a metamorphic space in which words breathe or rather breed tales of such substantiality that they seem capable of usurping all claims to material reality.

⁸⁷ In an attempt to clarify the play's problematic generic affiliation, Alastair Fowler identifies *The Winter's Tale* as a "tragicomedy in kind, with parts that are pastoral or romantic in mode" (55). I am here using Mowat's proffered designation, "tragicomic romance," as it expresses the play's generic investment in Elizabethan romance as well as in the up-and-coming genre of the early seventeenth century: tragicomedy (cf. "What's" 138).

3.1 Conceiving the Issue

Think pregnant.
(G. Jones 158)

‘Grotesque’ corporeality – Hermione’s pregnant body – looms large at the beginning of the play and magnetises the semantic space of the first three acts (cf. Nevo, *Shakespeare’s* 101).⁸⁸ When Hermione appears on stage accompanied by two kings, her protruding belly gives visible shape to the promise of infancy that sets the tone of the exposition: Mamillius’s youthful presence is established as the tonic of hope that “physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh” in the ageing kingdom of Sicilia (1.1.38-9).⁸⁹ Verbally, however, Hermione’s “fertile bosom” (1.2.113) is about to be emptied of its promising content in exchange for promiscuous imaginings whose public delivery will effect the death of the very figures that are established as life promoting agents (pregnant Hermione and young Mamillius) in the first half of the play.

The very first word that Polixenes utters in the second scene not only draws attention to Hermione’s pregnancy, it also links her condition with the duration of his stay; the last word of the sentence conflates (and inflates) both with the double meaning of the term ‘burden:’ “Nine changes of the watery star hath been / The shepherd’s note since we have left our throne / Without a burden.” (1.2.1-3) In a speech that, as Cavell has noted, incidentally occupies nine lines in the First Folio, the increase of words such as “burden,” “fill’d up,” and “multiply” (1.2.3, 4, 7) formally sustain this analogy to such a degree that it usually takes the audience some time to work out that Polixenes is not Hermione’s husband, nor is he referring to her condition (cf. 209).⁹⁰ Instead, he is ostensibly trying to find a way to break the unwelcome news of his departure to his hospitable hosts in a politely circumlocutory manner.

⁸⁸ The term grotesque as used in this context is based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the image of the grotesque body as a “body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body” (317). The grotesque involves anything that “protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off,” generative capabilities that become the sight/site of cultural imagination and contest (Bakhtin 320).

⁸⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (London: Routledge, 1993). All ensuing quotations from *The Winter’s Tale* are taken from this edition unless stated otherwise.

⁹⁰ Interestingly, it was the first professional ‘Elizabethan’ revival of the play after 1634 that corroborated the verbal ambiguity of the opening scenes in performance. Visually emphasising the play’s obsession with doubling, Winthrop Ames’s 1910 production for the New Theatre in New York equipped Leontes (Henry Kolker) and Polixenes (Charles Balsar) not only with the same ermine-trimmed coats and coronets but also with similar Italianate beards. With their extraordinary physical resemblance both actors were thus literally ‘as twinned’ to the spectators, who would have found it hard to tell husband from friend. Photographs of the production are reproduced in Bartholomeusz 137, 139, 141.

These first lines only give an inkling of what is to follow: the whole scene, it turns out, is liable to confusions and misunderstandings, transported in a language that – as several critics have noted – is remarkable for its indeterminacy and ambiguity.⁹¹ In contrast to *Pericles*, however, semantic instability in *The Winter's Tale* is initially perceived as liberating. It forms part of a courtly repartee in which, as Hermione gaily pronounces, “a lady’s Verily’s / As potent as a lord’s” (1.2.50-51). This affirmation of semantic (and, by intimation, sexual) freeplay that opens the scene is allowed little temporal space in a postlapsarian world enthralled by nostalgia for origins, the purity of ‘undifferentiated oneness’ and an ethic of archaic, or rather, arcadic innocence.⁹² In Polixenes’ Edenic recollection of the long since lost time of childhood, the privileged state of the “boy eternal” (1.2.64) is betrayed by time; the boyhood friends, “twinn’d lambs that did frisk i’th’ sun” (1.2.67), are inevitably *differed* by their growth into adulthood when innocence is lost to the doubtful bliss of (hetero)sexual experience.⁹³ The scope of female agency in such a pastoral is limited: as temptation incarnate, women merely feature in the role of “devils” (1.2.82) that invariably initiate the male innocent into a “doctrine of ill-doing” (1.2.70). It is their erotic interference that causes the fall from grace into a world of (carnal) knowledge.

The verbal games of comedy are turned into the grim fallacies of tragedy when Leontes, who has not taken part in this exchange of sophistries, begins to re-evaluate Hermione’s recent *discursive* interference – a witty display of rhetoric that succeeds in persuading Polixenes to stay longer when “At my request he would not” (1.2.87) – as an indication of ‘ill-doing.’ ‘Speaking to the purpose,’ Hermione’s potent tongue has won over Polixenes, who had previously assured Leontes that “There is no tongue that moves, none, none i’ th’ world / So soon as

⁹¹ I am particularly indebted to the following scholars for their erudite discussions on the play’s investigation into language: Carol Thomas Neely, “*The Winter’s Tale*: The Triumph of Speech,” in *The Winter’s Tale: Critical Essays*, ed. Maurice Hunt (New York: Garland, 1995) 243-57; Howard Felperin, “Tongue-tied, our Queen?: The Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan and Contemporary Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 35-55; William H. Matchett, “Some Dramatic Techniques in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969): 93-107; David Laird, “Competing Discourses in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 25-43; Stephen Orgel, “The Poetics of Incomprehensibility,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 421-37; Lynn Enterline, “You speak a language that I understand not’: The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 17-44; Martine van Elk, “‘Our praises are our wages’: Courtly Exchange, Social Mobility, and Female Speech in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Philological Quarterly* 79 (2000): 429-57.

⁹² I am here alluding to Jacques Derrida’s critique of Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology in “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences,” a critical intervention which incidentally ends “with a glance towards the operations of childbearing” and “the as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself ... whenever a birth is in the offing ... in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity,” a host of suggestive words which will also claim ‘much space’ in my reading of *The Winter’s Tale* (224).

⁹³ I am here using the term *differed* to indicate both the sense of graphic distinction and as well as temporal delay or deferral inherent in the meaning of the French verb *différer* that informs Derrida’s ‘non-concept’ of *différance*. Cf. also Jacques Derrida, “La Différance,” *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972) 1-29.

yours, could win me” (1.2.20-21). Leontes seems to be quite oblivious to the circumstance that his wife has only spoken at his expressive command (“Tongue-tied our Queen? speak you” [1.2.27]) when he compares Hermione’s verbal copiousness to her withholding silence during his own courtship. At that time, he recollects, she was ‘tongue-tied’ for three months before he “could make thee open thy white hand” (1.2.103) and persuade her to speak to his purpose. Fatally, like Desdemona before her, Hermione unwittingly exacerbates the jealous thoughts gathering to a head when she reminds him: “I have spoke to th’ purpose twice: / The one, for ever earn’d a royal husband; / Th’ other, for some while a friend” (1.2.106-8). This rhetorical juxtaposition of husband and friend proves to be ‘too hot’ for Leontes who in an aside already translates the verbal exchange into a sexual one: “To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods” (1.2.109-10). In the eyes of Leontes, Hermione’s liberal tongue and her liberal hand, offered freely to husband and friend alike, have been trespassing on sovereign territory, mistaking one lamb for the other.

Several attempts have been made to account for the sudden onset of Leontes’ overbearing jealousy which, as Orgel observes, really seems to need no explanation (cf. *Winter’s* 27): as the enormous output of early modern prescriptive literature indicates, it is part and parcel of a cultural anxiety that constructs male authority as dependent on the “coercive and symbolic regulation of women’s sexuality,” a sexuality construed as ‘naturally’ incontinent (Breitenberg 175).⁹⁴ As the “weaker vessel” (1 Pet. 3) in moral, spiritual and physiological terms, normative ‘woman’ in such conduct literature is signified by “the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house,” all of which Hermione counteracts in her role as eloquent hostess (Stallybrass, “Patriarchal” 127). Any suggestion of an ‘excessive’ (i.e. out of place) behaviour on the woman’s part easily becomes a possible indicator of sexual promiscuity, a notion that Viola expresses in *Twelfth Night* when she reminds the Clown that “they that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton” (3.1.13-14). In a culture where verbal restraint characterises the virtuous woman, it is the unexpected power of Hermione’s volubility, her linguistic flexibility, which seems to pose a threat to Leontes’ authority. Just as he cannot be sure that Hermione’s temporary verbal dilation is contained by the propagation of his wishes only, Leontes can no longer be sure that her temporary bodily dilation is contained by the propagation of legitimate issue (cf. Parker *Literary* 26). As the drama unfolds, Hermione’s voice is increasingly drowned out by Leontes’ jealous ravings while Hermione’s pregnant body, literally occupying centre-stage in act one, is increasingly banished from sight.

⁹⁴ For an ethnographic diagnosis of the interpretative anxiety that conditions early modern subjectivity see Mark Breitenberg’s *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

The oral dilemma is linked to a visual one once jealous Leontes sees Hermione with different eyes, or rather, as Carol Thomas Neely has it, does not see his wife at all.⁹⁵ Instead, she is turned into an object of surveillance, her body into a common (in both senses of the word) book where one may read strange matters. Everyone and everything is subjected to a hermeneutics of suspicion until even the smallest gesture becomes a “cipher ... standing in rich place” (1.2.6-7), the locus of some hidden impropriety. Bearing in mind that Shakespeare’s female roles were originally performed by boys, a staging of the maternal body, as Kathryn Moncrief and Kathryn McPherson point out, “must have depended upon costume, prosthetics and, as is clear by pregnancy portraits, an understanding of the symbolic gestures” (6). An example of such a pregnant gesture – a hand resting on the belly – Moncrief and McPherson find depicted in Marcus Gheerhaert the Younger’s *Portrait of an Unknown Lady*, ca. 1595 (cf. 2). In this context it is interesting to note that most modern stagings of this scene equally presume that the audience – in contrast to a jealously predisposed Leontes – would correctly ‘read’ Hermione’s gestures and heavy sighs as symptoms of her advanced pregnancy rather than as signs of suppressed amorous feelings towards Polixenes.

Eager to find proof, Leontes suffers from an apperceptive overload that articulates itself both in his “*tremor cordis*” (1.2.110), the dancing heart, and in his increasingly jerky syntax, the plosive alliteration in “paddling palms, and pinching fingers” (1.2.115). Leontes’ body, in other words, is out of balance, something that bodes ill in terms of the prevailing medical paradigm of the period. As a “set of doctrines and beliefs [that] held that physical health and mental disposition were determined by the balance within the four humoral fluids produced by the various stages of digestion,” illness, as Schoenfeldt has argued, is not understood as “the product of an infection from without but rather is the result of an internal imbalance of humoral fluid” (2). Although the dramatic text at this point does not identify the possible cause of such a disturbance, Shakespeare’s principal source for *The Winter’s Tale* does. Greene’s *Pandosto* opens with a detailed estimation of that “hellish passion” jealousy which ‘breeds’ the misery that shapes the ensuing tragic history of King Pandosto and his wife (184). In contrast to Leontes, however, the “melancholy passion” that overcomes Pandosto out of the blue only gradually inflames his imagination (186):

... a certain melancholy passion entering the mind of Pandosto drave him into sundry and doubtful thoughts.... These and such like doubtful thoughts, *a long time smothering* in his stomach, began at last to kindle in his mind a secret mistrust, which, increased by

⁹⁵ In her essay “*The Winter’s Tale*: The Triumph of Speech,” Neely argues convincingly that Leontes “employs reason, language, and tyranny to eradicate Hermione” (245). From the moment he gets jealous, Neely contends, Hermione becomes a mere abstract figment of his imagination in which she features in the depersonalised roles of wife, adulteress or traitress (cf. 246).

suspicion, grew at last to a flaming jealousy that so tormented him as he could take no rest.... (Greene 186, my emphasis)

Whereas Greene's fictional description closely adheres to contemporary theories of mental pathology in which jealousy is usually regarded as either a cause or a symptom of melancholy, Shakespeare seems more interested in dramatising its effects (cf. Burton 3: 273). Nevertheless, the symptoms and development of the illness are described accurately enough to justify further enquiry. As I will try to show, even a brief glimpse into the entrails of Galenic medical theory, the predominant medical paradigm of Shakespeare's time, offers insight into how the dramatisation of Leontes' jealousy contributes to the play's concern with the issue(s) of misrecognition.

Within Galen's corporeal economy, excess is always regarded as the culprit. Inordinate passions or affectations inevitably effect an alteration in the humoral complexion of the body or *vice versa*. A disturbed heart rhythm, such as Leontes' dancing heart, indicates such alteration. As Thomas Wright explains in his *Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), passions such as fear, sadness and despair literally depress the vital organ, causing "the gathering together of much melancholy blood about the heart, which collection extinguisheth the good spirits; ... besides, the heart being possessed by such an humour, cannot digest well the blood and spirits, which ought to be dispersed thorow the whole body, but converteth them into melancholy" (61). The Anglican clergyman and scholar Robert Burton graphically describes this sensation in his anatomy of "Hypocondriacall Melancholy" (1: 410): "there is a leaping all over their bodies, sudden trembling, a palpitation of the hart, and that *cardiaca passio*, grieffe in the mouth of the stomake, which maketh the patient thinke his heart it self aketh" (1: 411). This unruly humor not only affects the heart but also manages to perturb the mind. Gross vapours rising to the brain literally corrupt the judgement of the common sense generally thought to be situated in the brain together with imagination and memory.⁹⁶ This complex process is recapitulated in surprising medical accuracy by another imaginary cuckold: in Ben Jonson's 1598 comedy *Every Man in His Humour* (a play in which 'Will.Shakespeare' – as the 1616 Folio cast list suggests – appeared as one of the 'principal Comedians') the merchant Thomas Kitley expounds the workings of what he calls 'the mortal's plague' in terms that not only anticipate Leontes' own

⁹⁶ In his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (first published in 1621), Burton subdivides what he calls the "Apprehensive Facultie" of the "*Sensible Soul*" into the outward senses of touching, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and the inward senses which encompass common sense, fantasy or imagination and memory (1: 150). In a division of labour that seems to anticipate Freud's famous ego-id-superego tripartition, common sense, located at the front of the brain, is "the Judge or Moderator of the rest," qualifying the incoming sensual information that is processed further by imagination and memory (cf. Burton 1: 152-53).

self-diagnosis later in the scene, but also help to contextualise the many references to disease, infection and poison that dominate the first half of *The Winter's Tale*:

A new disease? I know not, new, or old,
But it may well be called poor mortal's plague:
For, like a pestilence, it doth infect
The houses of the brain. First it begins
Solely to work upon the fantasy,
Filling her seat with such pestiferous air,
As soon corrupts the judgement; and from thence
Sends like contagion to the memory:
Still each to other giving the infection.
Which, as subtle vapour, spreads itself
Confusedly, through every sensitive part,
Till not a thought, or motion, in the mind,
Be free from the black poison of suspect.
Ah, but what misery is it, to know this?
Or, knowing it, to want the mind's erection,
In such extremes? Well, I will once more strive,
(In spite of this black cloud) myself to be,
And shake the fever off, that thus shakes me.
(Jonson, *Every Man In His Humour* 2.3.55-72)

Leontes' body, in other words, harbours a disease that emasculates the 'erection' of the rational mind through the seductive insinuations of unruly fluids and vapours. The stirred imagination breeds "many monstrous and prodigious things," conceits of the mind that are in turn delivered by the tongue (Burton 1:152). Hermione, to put it bluntly, may not be the only one whose physical and verbal affluence presents a speculative cause for concern in early modern terms.

Passionately affected (in more than one sense), Leontes' perceptive capacity is out of focus, or, as Wright explains, is focused only on the object of his passion: "the imagination putteth greene spectacles before the eyes of our wit, to make it see nothing but greene, that is, serving for the consideration of the Passion" (51). The jealous man who "*begets unquietness in the minde, night and day*" becomes prey to the whims of his imagination (Burton, quoting Juan Luis Vives, 3: 297): "*he hunts after every word he heares, every whisper, and amplifies it to himself, ... with a most unjust calumny of others, hee misinterprets every thing is said or done, most apt to mistake or misconster, he pries in every corner, follows close, observes to an haire*" (Burton, partly quoting Vives, 3: 298). Neely's contention that Leontes can only see his wife as an abstracted category partial to his jealous suspicion is thus confirmed from an early modern medical point of view. Writing on the "optics of mad jealousy" in *The Winter's Tale*, Éliane Cuvelier makes a similar point (40): "Any perception of outer reality can reach the mind only through the oblique look of

suspicion” (40). It is a notion she finds expressed in the English proverb “love, being jealous, makes a good eye asquint” (qtd. in Cuvelier 40).

Isolating different body parts for observation, Hermione’s jealous husband detects “practis’d smiles” (1.2.116) and exaggerated sighs in what purports to be courteous behaviour; an “entertainment,” he finds, “My bosom likes not, or my brows” (1.2.118-19). Fantasy becomes fact once the concrete imagery of Leontes’ language materialises the imaginary trespass into existence (cf. Neely 243). Feeling, perceiving and knowing are thus conflated when Leontes sets the authenticity of his somatic (re)action in opposition to what he perceives to be the practised gestures of those that surround him, the acting bodies of Hermione and Polixenes. The metadramatic irony here, of course, lies in the fact that Leontes’ gestures are equally histrionic. His actions are after all not only propelled by an excited imagination in the fictional world of the play. Like Hamlet’s admired First Player, Leontes’ jealousy is generated by an actor who

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wanned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in’s aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit (*Ham.* 2.2.529-534)

Richard Burbage, the leading actor of the King’s Men who had made such a successful ‘personation’ of Hamlet, in all probability also played the part of Leontes. Renowned by his contemporaries as the “master of ‘lively’ or life like acting” (Gurr, *Shakespearean* 113), Burbage’s physical versatility would have been called upon to “qualifie euery thing according to the nature of the person personated” (Heywood sig. C4r). Seventeenth-century rhetorical theories about acting, such as Thomas Heywood’s *Apology for Actors* (1612), suggest that such personation would require the actor to undergo a physical transformation, or, as Joseph Roach puts it, “an actual change in ... bodily shape between passions and between roles” (43). Like Leontes, Burbage’s body, in other words, would be moved by passion. Unlike Leontes, however, Burbage would have been able to “fashio[n] his active spirits” into an expressive rather than excessive (e)motion of jealousy which (despite appearances) was confined in direction, purpose, and shape to the dictates of theatrical decorum, that “prudent mediocritie best ... marked in stage players” (T. Wright 179).

For spectators the degree of Leontes’ delusion is something that is determined not only by a recognisable display of jealousy (something Burbage would have perfected when playing Othello) but also by the performances of the other actors – its adherence to or departure from Leontes’ perception. As confidantes to his asides, the audience must of necessity see through

Leontes' eyes and interpret through his words, and yet, as Stephen Orgel has pointed out, his description "abandons any sense of the actual social scene taking place before us – two people talking – and makes it impossible to know from the text whether any of this is happening at all." (*Winter's* 20). The 1998/99 RSC production of the play attempted to rationalise the inexplicable: the first half of the play was offered as a studied account of psychotic jealousy in which even the stage design – five pairs of sliding panels that formed a perspective corridor – mirrored Leontes' "descent into instability," while Polixenes and Hermione were engaged in a playful dance (Tatspaugh 55). In an interview recorded for the production casebook of the play, Antony Sher, the actor who played Leontes, argues that the problem is best solved for actor and audience alike if Leontes is understood as "a sick man, an ill man rather than ... just a sort of psychopath." Nevertheless, like most actors of the post-Stanislavskian generation, Sher still found it vital to be able to 'connect' with, to embody a *character* in order to make his performance work. As he explains in his autobiography, in the early stages of the rehearsal process he found it hard to stomach the character of Leontes, who for him conjured up "An image of flesh, of sewage, of devils and cuckolds, it makes no clear sense" until gradually he found that "my *bile's just cooking* with his" (319, my emphasis). While Sher's experience of acting as felt corporeal experience and his use of Galenic terminology would have made sense to Burbage and company, his need to attribute Leontes' behaviour with a degree of psychological plausibility marks him as our contemporary.⁹⁷ By the end of the rehearsal process Sher had translated the disease of 'melancholy passion' into its modern equivalent, a medical condition generally known as 'morbid jealousy' or 'psychotic jealousy' (cf. Sher 321). As the theatre programme for the 1998 performance at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre makes clear, this approach was chosen with 'expert' support. Foremost amongst the authorities on mental disorder that are cited is the Freudian psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, who in turn conveniently corroborates his views about morbid jealousy, published in *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (1948), with reference back to Shakespeare, the 'expert' on human nature. According to Jones, "It is even difficult to say to what extent jealousy is a normal phenomenon, an inevitable accompaniment of love, and if so how this differs in nature, apart from its external manifestations, from what psychologists call morbid jealousy" (327). A condition akin to insanity, "fear here takes the form of a mad suspiciousness that overthrows all reason, that finds food in the most innocent trifles, and that distorts, misreads, misjudges evidence to such an extent that no sanity

⁹⁷ Yellow bile (often used synonymous with cholera), characterised by the quality of fire, was thought to be responsible for a choleric temperament while black bile (synonymous with melancholy) was associated with the qualities of earth. If humors were overheated or burned, they became malignant, dangerous to the health of body and mind. For an accessible introduction to the theoretical and practical aspects of medicine in early modern England, see David Hoeniger's *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark: UP of Delaware, 1992).

remains,” something, Jones concludes, which “did not escape the observation of the master-psychologist, Shakespeare” (329, 337). It is such a psychopathological rationalisation, in other words, which seems to do the trick for a modern audience. Although an illness which is categorised as mental disorder today is no longer explained within a taxonomy of internal organs and fluids, the manifest symptoms have not changed. Burton’s seventeenth-century characterisation of the jealous man who is marked by “strange gestures of staring, frowning, grinning, rolling of eyes, menacing, gastly lookes, broken pace, interrupt, precipitate, half turnes” read as if he had actually witnessed Sher’s performance which was noted for its expressive acrobatics (3: 298). Or *vice versa* as the following review from *The Sunday Times* suggests, in a vocabulary worthy of any follower of Galen: “Leontes ... is caught at a moment when something happens inside him, like a blood clot forming of its own substance in his vein” (Peter 18). What has changed, however, is the moral framework of illness. In a culture in which, as Schoenfeldt has illustrated, illness is perceived as “a symptom of immorality,” Sher’s rationale that playing an ill man guarantees him audience sympathy would have been met with considerable resistance (7). As Schoenfeldt notes: “One of the more troubling aspects of Galenic medicine is that while it makes the patient the agent rather than the victim of his or her health, it also provides a framework for blaming the patient for the illness that arbitrarily afflicts him or her” (7). And indeed: as Thomas Wright maintains in his moral philosophical treatise on the passions: “men having united in the same sensitive soule, reason and discourse, are bound, both by the law of Nature, and Commandment of God, divers times, to repress and resist such vnreasonable and beastly notions” (49). To an early modern audience, therefore, Leontes exhibits all the symptoms of a “jealous tyrant” (3.2.133) and will inevitably receive the punishment due to one. He may command sympathy only after a period of severe repentance.

While a contemporary audience, therefore, in all probability would have accepted Leontes’ jealousy for what it is overtly presented as – a sudden (e)motion of the body – it is almost impossible for the (post)modern reader/critic/director not to pick up on a prefatory “whisper of sexual innuendo” (Felperin 45) in a play in which from the very first lines, to use William Matchett’s words, the “language, no less than Hermione, is pregnant” (96). The Sicilian scenes in Gergory Doran’s 1998/99 production for the RSC, for example, opened with a dimmed stage on which the tableau-like entry of Leontes, Polixenes and Hermione was accompanied by an off-stage chorus of whispers amidst which phrases like “Is whispering nothing?” (1.2.284) and “Too hot, too hot!” (1.2.108) were just discernible. Like the suspicious husband, it seems, the impassioned critic may quickly catch the plague, albeit on an epistemological level. To quote Howard Felperin: “once having occurred, this fall into textual instability cannot be

reversed, since it is not the text but our *perception* of the text that has radically altered” (51, my emphasis). Driven by their distorted vision, jealous husband and zealous critic alike thus embark on an inquisitorial crusade for epistemological mastery, an implication, whether intended or not, that points to the pitfalls of over-interpretation even while it conditions the critic’s response to Leontes’ tragic flaw: complicity in mind makes it difficult to cast the first stone.⁹⁸

3.2 The Bawdy Planet

I put between your holy looks
My ill suspicion.
(*WT* 5.3.153-54)

Together with Leontes, therefore, we proceed to discover a “bawdy planet” (1.2.201), a globe of sinful cont(in)ents everywhere. Mamillius’ “smutch’d nose” (1.2.121), the nose that “They say is a copy out of mine” (1.2.122), is sullied by sexual impropriety while Mamillius himself is turned into a “wanton calf” (1.2.126) – at once a metaphor for cuckoldry and its product, bestial offspring. Whereas the “varying childness” (1.2.170) of his son is the medicine that cures Polixenes of melancholy – “Thoughts that would thicken my blood” (1.2.171) – it is Mamillius’ *varying* childness, the possibility that he is not his son, which obsesses Leontes. Any affirmations of Mamillius’ physical likeness are discredited, based as they are on the word of women “That will say any thing” (1.2.131). The relation between oral testimony and visual evidence becomes an arbitrary one, to be manipulated at will (cf. also Orgel, *Winter’s* 20-21). While his suspicious imaginings generate more and more promiscuous meanings, Leontes increasingly loses hold of a world in which there is a difference between perception and imagination. In a notoriously obscure passage, Leontes himself most adequately anatomises his condition in a speech that forms the apex of what Felperin has identified to be a pervasive presence of “linguistic indeterminacy” in the play (43). I will quote the First Folio version of the speech in full:⁹⁹

⁹⁸ See also Elisabeth Bronfen’s excellent essay, “The Conspiracy of Gender: Hamlet’s and Ophelia’s Passionate Histrionics” in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 140 (2004): 66-80, for a reading that engages in an equally anachronistic “historical cross-mapping” to uncover – from a position of posteriority – in *Hamlet* an inaugural text both for the paranoid subject as well as for the “paranoid tone of contemporary hermeneutic practices like psychoanalysis and deconstruction” (68, 69).

⁹⁹ Both David Ward and Stephen Orgel argue for a restoration of the ‘unrevised’ First Folio reading of this passage although their reasons differ: while the latter argues that the textual tangles of the Folio retain the linguistic complexity and obscurity that is a willed feature of the play (cf. “Poetics” 434), the former suggests that the Folio punctuation is vital for making sense of this passage (cf. 545). Ward’s reading, which analyses the key words ‘affection’ and ‘intention’ in the context of contemporary

Affection? thy Intention stabs the Centre.
 Thou do'st make possible things not so held,
 Communicat'st with Dreams (how can this be?)
 With what is unreal: thou coactive art,
 And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very crecedent,
 Thou may'st co-join with something, and thou do'st,
 (And that beyond Commission) and I find it,
 (And that to the infection of my Braines,
 And hardning of my Browes.) (278: 214-22)

Ambiguous terms such as 'affection' and 'intention' are unmoored from their referents by an indeterminate syntax; Leontes seems to be talking about passion, promiscuity and imagination at once.¹⁰⁰ Abstract reasoning 'co-joins' with an excited fantasy to conceive a "specific, ugly, free-floating image of intercourse" into being (Neely 244). Just as in Leontes' first jealous outburst, therefore, this has a material effect, causing an "infection of my brains / And hard'ning of my brows" (1.2.145-46). Through the dissemination of meaning, the passage rhetorically replicates the compulsively self-generating nature of Leontes' imagination in which fantasies of illicit pregnancy produce exactly what they conjure up: an illegitimate issue.

In his essay on the topic of labour in *The Winter's Tale*, Maurice Hunt similarly argues that there is a symbolic contest over childbirth in the play: Leontes' work of generation produces a brain-child that supplants the fruits of Hermione's labour for the next sixteen years (cf. "Labor" 338). In this context it is perhaps interesting to note that as late as 1651, William Harvey (famous for discovering the circulation of blood) in his *Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals* (1653) compares the uterus with a brain and the conception of a child with the conception of an idea (cf. Laqueur 42). According to Laqueur, this correlation between intellectual and biological procreation can be traced back to the Aristotelian notion of conception as an artistic process in which the man has an idea in the brain-uterus of the woman (cf. 256n46), an analogy Shakespeare also explicitly employs in *Richard II*: "My brain I'll prove the female to my soul, / My soul the father, and these two beget / A generation of still breeding thoughts" (5.5.6-8). However, as I have tried to show, Leontes' active 'brain,' acting under the dictates of jealous passion which, like Othello's, "Shapes faults that are not" (*Othello* 3.3.153), is clearly placed in the context of disease and disorder: it is the offspring of a monstrous conception that threatens to supplant the 'natural' one.

medicine and psychology, suggests that Leontes at this point is aware of the fact that affection (passion) has power over his grasp of reality (cf. 553).

¹⁰⁰ According to *Shakespeare's Words*, a glossary compiled by David and Ben Crystal, *affection* can signify fancy, inclination, desire, emotion, love, devotion, disposition, partiality and affectation (cf. 11) while *intention*, a term Shakespeare only ever uses in *The Winter's Tale*, is glossed as "intention, forceful purpose, powerful direction" (242).

We have come a long way from *Pericles*. Fortune's 'tennis-ball' is succeeded by a protagonist who resembles a "mad artist, creating to destroy" (D. Young 125). As I have tried to show, the grotesque image of the body in this play manifests itself not so much in Hermione's protruding belly as in the hyperbolic rhetoric that complements the hysteric twitching of Leontes' heart. For Puttenham, any speech that does not observe the rules of decorum or "decency," as Leontes' clearly does not, signifies "illfavouredness or disproportion," like a body deformed that is "without his due measures and symmetry," a monstrous creation "unseemly to the sense" (347).¹⁰¹ The disproportionate expansiveness of Leontes' language eclipses the material significance of Hermione's pregnant belly, a space that ought to be "crammed with praise" (1.2.91).

How he proceeds to conceive the 'something' that is the matter out of the insubstantiality of 'nothing,' Leontes himself illustrates in another verbal outburst, an onslaught of rhetorical questions provoked by Camillo's explicit refusal to adopt Leontes' 'conceited' perspective:

Is whispering nothing?
 Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
 Kissing with the inside lip? stopping the career
 Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
 Of breaking honesty)? horsing foot on foot?
 Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
 Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
 Blind with the pin and web but theirs; theirs only.
 That would unseen be wicked? Is this nothing?
 Why then the world, and all that's in't, is nothing,
 The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
 My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
 If this be nothing. (1.2.284-96)

What initially comes across as a microcosmic "lexicon of body language that ... carries a direct appeal to empirical observation" almost imperceptibly changes into speculations that are backed by a bulwark of macrocosmic 'nothings' (Felperin 41-42). With his blood running hot, the "decorous rationality" of Leontes' language is audibly cracking under the pressure of an emotional frenzy (J. Smith 318). Although Leontes is ostensibly driven by a desire to regain his absolutist hold of the world, a world which is void of anything that is "muddy, so unsettled" (1.2.325), the "omnipresence of mutability," as William Morse has argued, "makes any mastery of it ephemeral" (292): "Fearful of metamorphic reality," Morse maintains, "Leontes is

¹⁰¹ For a detailed survey of the relationship between early modern rhetoric and the body see Wayne A. Rebhorn's *The Emperor of Men's Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 197-258.

pursued, like an Actaeon, by metaphor itself – the vital, aggressive insistence of his own supposedly rational language to metamorphose even as he speaks it” (292).

Not to know of Hermione’s trespass, Leontes tells a startled Camillo, is to be insensible, “To have nor eyes, nor ears, nor thought” (1.2.275). With this sample of his logic, Leontes does indeed manage to convince Camillo that something is the matter, but not in the way he expected. Instead, Camillo is now certain that it is Leontes who has lost his sense(s): “Good my lord, be cur’d / Of this diseas’d opinion, and betimes, / For ‘tis most dangerous” (1.2.296-98). As Wright observes, where “false representation breedeth a false conceit in the minde ... men ... can scarce *speake, see, heare, or thinke* of any thing, which concerneth not their passion” (52). Linguistically, the ‘something’ on which Leontes’ case rests, is hollowed out by an increasingly frequent invocation of empty signifiers, of ‘nothing’ (a word that occurs eight times in this passage alone) until ironically it is the only substantiality that remains. Whereas Othello’s world is unhinged by the possibility, brought home to him by Iago, that ‘nothing’ might be the matter with his wife, Leontes’ speech offers us a glimpse into a self-created hermeneutic abyss where the conception of an absolute truth is deduced from a linguistic conditional that almost mockingly drives the tragedy home: if this be nothing?

But Leontes appears to be beyond help. Fully operating within the logic of simulacrum in which language coerces a bodily reality of its own, Leontes busily continues to “recreate himself and the world in the shape of his delusion,” ignoring any perspective other than his own (Adelman 224). Hermione must be false, otherwise ‘chaos is come again’. Like Othello, or indeed most of Shakespeare’s tragic heroes, Leontes, as Adelman observes, does not require ocular (or, in his case, oracular) proof when he resorts to the “culturally familiar fiction of female betrayal in marriage as an acceptable narrative” that allows him to reformulate the destabilising sense of loss in absolute terms (224). As cuckold, he can at least stage himself as the victim of female infidelity, a fate he believes to share with most married men: “nay, there’s comfort in’t ... Should all despair / That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind / Would hang themselves. Physic for’t there’s none” (1.2.196-200). And indeed, at this stage, none seems to be forthcoming since Leontes is one of those who “have the disease, and feel’t not” (1.2.207).

The promise of an invigorating ‘issue’ that has raised so many expectations at the beginning of the play has so far become an issue only of concern:¹⁰² images of birth are increasingly paired with images of disease, illness and pollution. While Camillo and Polixenes are left to conjecture on “what is breeding / That changes thus his manners” (1.2.274-75), Leontes is

¹⁰² For a taxonomy of the multiple meanings of the word ‘issue’ in the play see M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare’s Wordplay* (London: Methuen, 1957) 150.

preoccupied with containing the damage that he believes to be breeding from Hermione's adulterous affection. Mamillius is separated from his mother who is treated "like one infectious" (3.2.98) since she gives "scandal to the blood o' th' prince, *my* son" (1.2.330, my emphasis). When Mamillius does fall ill, from Leontes' point of view this can only be explained by the fact that he has, in the end, literally been "Conceiving the dishonour of his mother" (2.3.13). By projecting the infection of his brain onto Hermione's unbarricaded belly that will "let in and out the enemy / With bag and baggage" (cf. 1.2.205-06), Leontes finds a way to see it as the visible "sign of her infidelity, rather than the sign of his sexual concourse with her" (Adelman 224). As a consequence, he can deny his connection with her body, something that also allows him to eventually disown its issue. As so often, Leontes unwittingly assesses the truth of his situation when he professes himself to be an unwilling actor in an all-too-common theatre of female adultery in which he plays "so disgrac'd a part" that the "issue / Will hiss me to my grave" (1.2.188, 189-90).

3.2.1 (II)legal Issues

That he certainly appears to be headed for "some foul issue" (2.3.152) becomes apparent when Leontes returns to the play as fully-fledged tyrant in act two. From crown to toe top-full of what he believes to be "just censure" and "true opinion" (2.1.37), Leontes brutally intrudes on and terminates a scene of playful intimacy between mother and son. In what is perhaps the most touching example of dramatic irony in the play, Mamillius' "sad tale ... of Sprights, and Goblins" (2.1.25-26), a tale about fictive frights, is surpassed by the 'horrible imaginings' authored by his father. The news of Polixenes' and Camillo's escape suffices to convince Leontes that his suspicions are grounded in actuality: "There is a plot against my life, my crown; / All's true that is mistrusted" (2.1.47-48). Again, the notion of betrayal is most immediately troped by images of independently acting body parts.¹⁰³ This time it is Leontes' figurative right hand, his trusted councillor Camillo, that has wandered astray to become "pilot" (1.2.448) to his (br)other, Polixenes. Both are thus "beyond mine arm, out of the blank / And level of my brain: plot-proof" (2.3.5-6).

¹⁰³ According to John Bulwer, a physician whose twin treatises *Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand* and *Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric* (1644) mark the beginning of a modern interest in gesture, the motions of the body not only "disclose the disposition and inclination of the minde in general; ... but doe further disclose the present humour and state of the minde and will" (13). Gesture, in other words, is understood as natural language, and thus (contrary to the tongue) a "great discoverer of dissimulation" (Bulwer 14). As John Astington notes, the joining of hands is a conventional stage gesture appropriate to lovers but it could also signify friendship or political alliance (cf. 115).

Determined to weed out the ‘poisonous’ ambiguity and duplicity among those that are still within his reach, Leontes ventures on a crusade for “the order of language and the language of order” (Laird 33). To that end, Leontes does not shrink from verbally abusing his highly pregnant wife in public. The “mannerly distinguishment” (2.1.86) of his language threatens to desert him when he tries to articulate the polysemy of Hermione’s offence. As a “bed-swerver” (2.1.93), she has transgressed her place both in a literal and a figurative sense: exchanging Leontes’ bed for that of Polixenes, she has also exchanged the place of a queen for that of a ‘common thing’ (cf. 2.1.81-87). Despite Hermione’s insistence that it can only be the accuser that “did mistake” (2.1.99), Leontes persists mercilessly. In the name of “natural goodness” (2.1.164), Hermione is published an adulteress and a traitor and sent to prison. Her affluent body now officially materialises a dilation that is no longer contained by the propagation of a legitimate issue: “‘tis Polixenes / Has made thee swell thus” (2.1.61-62). The grotesque maternal body that “is spread of late / Into a goodly bulk” (2.1.19-20) has become the physical stand-in for the profusion of linguistic, political and moral chaos, the unregulated signification that Leontes wants removed from his person, and by extension, his realm. As king, Leontes “rules by the word and the word must be law” (Laird 33). The substantive unruliness of Hermione’s body is to be subjected to an absolutism of text, the meaning of which is authored by Leontes and by Leontes only: “He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty / But that he speaks” (2.1.104-5). The disappearance of Hermione at the beginning of the second act signals the end of free speech in Leontes’ realm: by locking up Hermione, as Paulina maintains, the king “lock[s] up honesty and honour” (2.2.10). Reason exits Sicilia as if pursued by a bear.

Leontes’ despotic pronouncements do not stand uncontested. While he may be ignorant of the implications of his speech acts, his lords are not. By articulating their wish that he “had only on our silent judgement tried it, / Without more overture” (2.1.171-72), they make an important point. It is only by pronouncing Hermione’s alleged sexual trespass as a matter of public concern that she does indeed become the ‘public woman’ that Leontes has suspected her to be all along, one whose private place (in a linguistic and sexual double entendre) has become a ‘common’ one, exposed to the public eye and subject to public debate.¹⁰⁴ Antigonus puts his finger on the problem when he tries to draw Leontes’ attention to the consequences of a public arraignment: “Be certain what you do, Sir, lest your justice / Prove violence, in which three great ones suffer, / Yourself, your queen, your son” (2.1.127-29). With this sentence, Antigonus in effect questions Leontes’ capacity to distinguish between his personal and his political will, something that, in the opinion of another monarch, marks the “trew difference

¹⁰⁴ For the complex of misogynist double entendres that surrounds the ‘public’ woman see Patricia Parker’s seminal *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), esp. 105-106.

betwixt a lawfull good King, and an vsurping Tyran” (James I, *Basilikon* 20). The words derive from a political bestseller of the period, *Basilikon Doron*, a treatise written by King James in 1589 purportedly to instruct his son, Prince Henry, in the matters of kingship. In the second book James points out that in contrast to the good king who subjects “his owne private affections and appetites to the weale and standing of his Subiects, ever thinking the common interesse his chiefest particular,” the tyrant will “(by inverting all good Lawes to serve onely for his vnruilie priuate affectiones) frame the common-weale ever to advance his particular: building his suretie vpon his peoples miserie: and in ende ... make vp his owne hande vpon the ruines of the Republicke” (*Basilikon* 20). Camillo stresses a similar point when he fears that Leontes as head of the body politic is “in rebellion with himself, [and] will have / All that are his, so too” (1.2.355-56). Leontes’ emotional turmoil, in other words, not only puts at risk a long-term friendship, the loving relation with his wife and the well-being of his children, but, in a political sense, risks the alliance of two kingdoms, the loving relation with his subjects and the generativity of the body politic. This semantic overlapping of political, physiological and psychological discourses is frequently found in early modern treatises that touch on the subject of disorder. Thomas Wright, ostensibly concerned with the effect of passions on men’s minds, uses a political metaphor to illustrate this point: “Inordinate affections ... trouble the peaceable state of this Common-weale of our soule” (68). In an age, as Schoenfeldt has illustrated, in which “temperance became a central ethical virtue” (7), it should not come as a surprise that King James regarded “wise moderation” as the chief of the cardinal virtues necessary for executing laws (*Basilikon* 43). A good ruler exercises “Iustice, but with such moderation as it turne not in Tyrannie: otherwaies *summum Ius*, is *summa iniuria*” (James I, *Basilikon* 43).

Leontes’ ears, however, are stopped to such moderate and moderated reason. As he tells his councillors, he sees and feels ‘this business’ in the very fibre of his body (cf. 2.1.151-54). The betrayal by those that are closest to his heart has caused an injury which he believes has not unbalanced but rather sharpened his senses; only he is able to see the matter clearly. In Leontes’ opinion, his own “forceful instigation” (2.1.163) is the only guidance needed in this case. Faced with the evident hesitation of his lords to accept such reasoning, Leontes conflates the physical and the emotive with the political: treachery is directed against the head of the body politic, his “free person” (2.1.194), and thus must be dealt with as an attack against the well-being of the body politic as a whole. In 1609, addressing Parliament, James I invokes the metaphor of the king as the head of a collective body, stylising himself as a kind of master-physician who both feels the disease and knows where to cut: “as for the head of the naturall body, the head hath the power of directing all the members of the body to that vse which the

iudgement in the head thinkes most convenient. It may apply sharpe cures, or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion it thinkes fit, and as the body may spare” (*King* 182). Of course, this process of cut and cure does not work the other way around. As James writes in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (first published 1598): “but what state the body can be in, if the head, for any infirmities that can fall to it, be cut off, I leave it to the readers iudgement” (78).¹⁰⁵ Eventually taking refuge in the mystic qualities of the crown, Leontes uses the royal “we” to remind his court of the divine infallibility that shapes his decisions: “Our prerogative / Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness / Imparts this” (2.1.163-65). The gist of these lines is fully articulated by King James in his Star Chamber speech of 1616, where he reminds the parliament of the king’s royal prerogative: “Kings are properly Iudges, and Iudgement properly belongs to them from GOD: for Kings sit in the Throne of GOD, and hence all Iudgement is derived” (*King* 205). In this argument for an absolutist, divine-right view of monarchy, as Jonathan Goldberg has pointed out, “sovereign power affirms itself by claiming that what it enacts is outside itself and transcendent” (6). As a mouthpiece of God’s will, the law the king speaks is of necessity just; no oracle is needed to confirm this.

As Albert Rolls has shown in his analysis of the political concept of the king’s two bodies, James was intent on claiming absolute authority for both his body natural and politic (cf. *Theory* 71). In order to achieve this goal, he simply discarded the distinction between the metaphysical and collective quality of the latter body that the lawyer Edmund Plowden had so carefully introduced in his *Commentaries or Reports* of 1571 (cf. Rolls, *Theory* 57).¹⁰⁶ Without this distinction, as Rolls points out, the king would have to be regarded as infallible since it would be impossible to distinguish the king as member of the collective body politic, subject to its laws, from the king in his function as immortal body politic, above the law (cf. *Theory* 59). In effect, this “facilitates collapsing the collective entity into the natural body and endowing the natural will with the sovereignty Plowden had limited to the body politic alone” (Rolls, *Theory* 73-74). This is exactly what James intends when, in contrast to Elizabeth, he repeatedly asserts the unity of his personal and political selves, emphasising that the royal prerogative is both innate and unique to his person. As God’s Lieutenant on earth, the king is exemplary; if he

¹⁰⁵ In his *Comparative Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique* (1606), Edward Forset, Lord Chief Justice of London at the beginning of James I’s reign, takes the analogy into an absolutist direction by arguing that the king as an ideal body can only ever be diseased if the members of the political body have infected him: “the diseases of the head, are originally arising and caused from the bodie.... Therefore when from the head a fluxe of humours should annoy and enfeeble the whole, or any part, I wish it should be remembred, that such as is our offering, such should be our suffering” (28).

¹⁰⁶ For a readily accessible edition on sixteenth-century formulations of the concept, see Albert Rolls, *Documents Illustrating the Theory of the King’s Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare: The Reports of Edmund Plowden and A Comparative Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2006).

somehow happens to be wicked, his subjects should be “following and obeying his lawfull commands, eschewing and flying his fury in his vnlawfull, without resistance, but by sobbes and teares to God” (James, *Trew* 72). James is here evidently trying to avoid following through the ultimately self-constructing logic of his royalist ideology. Accordingly, tyranny is dismissed as a mere imaginary construct; James’ tyrants come across as fictional bogey-figures whose real existence can hardly be conceived at all: “For a king cannot be imagined to be so vnruely and tyrannous, but the common-wealth will be kept in better order, notwithstanding thereof, by him, then it can be by his way-taking” (*Trew* 79). Like Mamillius’ story, therefore, James I’s tale of sprites and goblins is declared a sad tale that’s best for winter.

The critical engagement of the play with Stuart ideology has already been commented on comprehensively by several critics.¹⁰⁷ The purpose of this digression into James I’s prolific writings on political philosophy is to clarify the discursive mechanisms that inform Leontes’ claims of royal prerogative and his (ab)use of sovereign power. The opportunist conflation of private and political will that Leontes employs reverberates with the ambiguities that inform contemporary discussions on the rights of kings. That the notion of divine right was not accepted unconditionally can be deduced not only from Shakespeare’s plays, but also from the work of one of James I’s greatest apologists. In his *Comparative Discourse* (1606), Edward Forset unwittingly exposes the discursive nature of divine justice in a small anecdote on Jupiter, the patron deity of the exercise of sovereign power (and the presiding divinity in *Cymbeline*). In an argument for the essential superiority of kings, he cites the Democritean philosopher Anaxarchus (4th century BC, famous for his comparison of reality to a stage-painting) as having advised Alexander the Great that just because Justice sits at Jupiter’s right hand in poetry and portraiture, “*Iupiter* was not bound thereby to doe iustly, but that the people were thereof to conceive, that whatsoever *Iupiter* did was iust” (5). Leontes’ invocation of absolute authority, an authority based on the equation of might and right, functions in a similar way. Not only does it present Leontes with an authorising ground for the pursuit of his personal desire, it also silences dissenting voices, something that helps promote Leontes’ ‘natural goodness’ as a ruler: “In a world of words, he is the chief artificer and enforcer, accountable to nothing beyond himself and the dictates of his now rancorous passion” (Laird 31). We have come full circle to the Antiochian court that opened *Pericles*: in both Sicilia and Antioch “Kings are earth’s gods;

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Constance Jordan, *Shakespeare’s Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997); Stuart M. Kurland, “‘We need no more of your advice’: Political Realism in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991): 365-86; David Laird, “Competing Discourses in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 25-43; William R. Morse, “Metacriticism and Materiality: The Case of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*,” *English Literary History* 58 (1991): 283-304.

in vice their law's their will" (*Per.* 1.1.104). When Hermione is brought to trial, the stage is set for the ultimate display of linguistic and judicial tyranny.

3.2.2 The Miscarriage of Justice

The difference between the two bodies that encounter each other in this 'just' and 'open' trial could not be more pronounced: the mysteriously impenetrable body of the King faces the vulnerable body of the accused subject. Hermione, who has just given birth in prison, has been "hurried / Here, to this place, i'th' open air, before / I have got strength of limit" (3.2.102-04) to defend herself against the charges of high treason. The impact of this spectacle of imbalance was brilliantly captured by Doran's 1998/99 production at Stratford-upon-Avon where the entire court (and audience) audibly gasped at Hermione's appearance: anything but queenly, Alexandra Gilbreath's Hermione entered the stage in a filthy prison shift, manacled and obviously exhausted. Her hands were clutching the rails of the dock in which she had to stand opposite Anthony Sher as King, who in turn was dressed in full regalia and seated on an elevated throne. The long stains on Hermione's shift just below her breasts not only emphasised in very physical terms that she had been denied the "childbed privilege ... which 'longs / To women of all fashion" (3.2.101-2), but also that she had been deprived of the 'fruits' of her body, her new-born child literally being "from my breast / (The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth) / Hal'd out to murder" (3.2.99-101).¹⁰⁸ In an interview recorded on the RSC casebook video of the stage production, Gilbreath emphasises the importance of the bodily change Hermione has undergone, saying that on her entry "you turn around and you still see – without being graphic – the birth fluid." With its very body-conscious staging of this scene, Doran's production not only gave 'substance' to the birth symbolism that pervades the play, but also effectively communicated the horror of Hermione's indictment to a modern audience.

That Leontes' treatment of Hermione could only be understood as an act of "immodest hatred" (3.2.102) by a contemporary audience is an interpretation that is underscored by a treatise on the "Duties of Husbands" written by the puritan preacher William Gouge, whose

¹⁰⁸ The childbed privilege encompasses the ritual enclosure of a pregnant woman with her female attendants in a birthing chamber. The lying-in period usually lasted from the onset of labour to about four weeks later, "when the newly delivered mother would publicly reemerge from her house for a 'churching ceremony' celebrating her safe delivery, perhaps a successful birth, and her full return to social existence" (Paster 185). See also David Cressy's *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) for a detailed account of the ceremonies of childbirth as they are embedded in early modern popular culture.

conduct book *Of Domestical Duties* (1622) went through several revised editions. As Gouge reminds his readers, during the time of labour a woman's "body is as it were set on a racke ... and all their parts so stretched, as a wonder it is they should ever recover their health and strength againe.... Besides the great pang of travell, women are also after their deliverie subject to many *After-threws* which are very painfull" (400). The failure to acknowledge and provide for the needs of the woman "in the time of their travell and child-bed" shows an "inhumane and more than barbarous vnkindnesse" in the man (Gouge 401). This reprimand is especially addressed to those husbands, who

... through ielous suspicion forbear not even in the time of their wives paine and weknesse, to vpraid them with lightnesse, and to say that the childe is none of theirs. To lay this to a wives charge vniustly, is at any time a most shamefull and odious reproach: but in the time of childbirth whether iust or vniust, a thing too too spightfull and revengefull. (Gouge 401-02)

As Gail Kern Paster sums it up: "Leontes' tyranny is constituted not only by his *mistake* in suspecting Hermione but also by his violation of what is due to her and all women in the management of their 'great pain and peril'" (*Body* 273, emphasis in original). In the context of this play, Gouge's warning about the 'mischiefs' that such behaviour provokes has an almost prophetic ring to it and illustrates just how credible Hermione's sudden 'death' at the end of the scene must have been in physical terms: "Some wives are so farre overcome thereby ... as they are not able to bear it, but even faint and die vnder reproach: others more stovt vow never to know their husbands againe. Many like mischiefes follow on such vnkindnesse." (Gouge 402). Under Leontes' topsy-turvy regime the comforts and seclusion of a birthing chamber is replaced by the confines of a prison while the trial with its accompanying public humiliation and rejection displaces the churching ceremony, the ritual which marked the woman's public reincorporation into the social body (cf. Paster, *Body* 272).

The fact that most RSC productions prior to Doran's have resorted to a less outspoken depiction of violence (or did not make any visual reference to it at all) may have been borne out of an attempt not to compound Leontes' cruelty towards his wife any further than necessary.¹⁰⁹ Doran, however, effectively addressed this problem by pitting Hermione's vulnerable state against the physical and mental exhaustion of her husband who at this stage had reached the peak of his illness, having had "Nor night, nor day, no rest" (2.3.1). Sher's Leontes could hardly carry his royal robes as he stumbled up the steps of his throne. Obviously unable to hold his thoughts together, he suddenly stopped mid-speech, fumbled for his glasses

¹⁰⁹ For a survey on the post-war RSC performance history of *The Winter's Tale* in Stratford-upon-Avon see Patricia E. Tatspaugh, *The Winter's Tale* (London: Arden Shakespeare-Thomson Learning, 2002).

and fished a typed indictment out of his pocket, hardly managing to read it out. As Maeve Walsh writes in her review for the *Independent on Sunday*, “Sher’s faltering, distracted reading of a prepared statement betrays the majesty of his ermine robes and conviction of his judicial role” (6). Again, Leontes is shown to be ‘out’ of his role (cf. 2.1.72), a player king who merely claims the trappings of royalty in a theatre of justice. The audience is reminded of this whenever the actor becomes visible beneath the skin of his character. Sher manages to sustain this tension throughout the first half of the play, in crucial moments “encouraging the audience to think that it’s me, the actor, losing my way” (323). As Peter Thomson notes, this lively dialectic between actor and character would have been the stock-in-trade of the early modern player: “Because they could combine the presentational and representational, virtually all ... actors had access to the sheer theatricality of the anti-character; a tertium quid who may serve, at any moment, as a disconcerting mediator between the player and the part, or between the player, the part and the audience” (*On Actors* 15).

In performance, Hermione’s role opposite Leontes is not necessarily as straightforward as it initially appears to be. In the RSC casebook video interview, Gilbreath indicates that she wanted to present Hermione “as a woman who has nothing.” At the same time she feels Hermione should not be understood as “a victim because she chooses not to be a victim,” something that, as Gilbreath suggests, transpires in the manner of her defence. Gemma Jones, who played Hermione for the 1981 RSC production directed by Ronald Eyre, equally felt that the image of a broken down Hermione was incompatible with the controlled verbal demeanour she exhibits in the trial scene. Consequently, Jones revised her initial ideas on how to act this scene during the rehearsal process:

... I fancy being dragged on what is left by my hair, in chains from head to foot. But ... we realize that Hermione’s speech in the trial scene cannot be performed on an emotive wail.... She is articulate, objective and strong.... To present the words as naked of imposition or comment as possible and yet to endow them with the full value of their worth is a challenge that ... will prove more moving, and a simple shift, bare feet, and hand-cuffs will suggest all that needs to be said about her physical condition. (G. Jones 161)

What the original staging would have looked like is impossible to ascertain. But what can be determined is that in this scene Hermione speaks a language that is directly opposed to the leaky, impure and traitorous body Leontes insists on staging. The decorum of Hermione’s manner of defence, the restraint of her speech, its proportion and balance conjures up a self-contained bodily image that evokes her ‘proper’ role and position: she speaks with the dignity of a queen. Taking this idea a step further, I would like to argue that not only the manner of her speech, but the very *mise-en-scène*, exceptional as it might seem, must in fact have resonated

strongly with the audience of the time. Several critics as diverse as Horace Walpole, Lindsay Kaplan and Katherine Eggert, and Stephen Orgel, have called attention to the similarities between Hermione's trial and that of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn.¹¹⁰ Although the comparison has its merits for a topical reading of the play, I would like to concentrate instead on yet another queen's famous trial that I believe to be hovering behind this scene just as its protagonist was hovering behind the relationship of Anne and Henry. The queen is Catherine of Aragon and the scene is the public trial that investigated the validity of her marriage to King Henry VIII in the Monastery of Blackfriars in June 21, 1529. As an event without precedence – for the first time in English history a king and queen appeared in a public trial – it was recorded in detail.¹¹¹ Not much was needed to adapt this spectacular event for the stage. When Shakespeare had his hand in restaging this very scene for the historic romance *King Henry VIII*, also known as *All Is True* (a play performed only two years after *The Winter's Tale*), he did not even have to worry about the location: as Gordon McMullan has pointed out, there is considerable irony in the fact that the Blackfriars theatre in which the play was very possibly staged was located in the very same hall in which the divorce hearing had taken place some eighty years earlier (cf. *King* 144). The same applies to the performance of *The Winter's Tale*. What I intend to show with yet another co(n)textual detour, therefore, is that a contemporary audience of the play in all probability would have conflated the acting body in front of them with the historical body of at least one queen who, with wide-reaching consequences for the realm, had to defend her honour and her marriage before a king who was thought to act under the influence of excessive passion.¹¹² The 'body connection' between these two queens, something that has received comparatively little scholarly attention, has been kept alive in performance history, most notably perhaps by the actresses Sarah Siddons, who played both Katherine and Hermione (the latter with great success over a period of ten years from 1801 onwards), and more recently Gemma Jones, who played Queen Katherine at the Royal

¹¹⁰ Horace Walpole, *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard the Third* (Wakefield: EP, 1974) 114-16; M. Lindsay Kaplan and Katherine Eggert, "'Good Queen, My Lord, Good Queen': Sexual Slander and the Trials of Authority in *The Winter's Tale*," *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994): 96-101; Stephen Orgel, ed. *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 29-31.

¹¹¹ For a contemporary account of this scene, see George Cavendish's *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (London: Oxford UP, 1959) 79-82. Cavendish was Wolsey's personal attendant (gentleman-usher). His memoirs were probably written sometime between 1554 and 1558 after which they were circulated in manuscript form until they were published in 1641. Shakespeare's adaptation of the scene is thought to be based on Raphael Holinshed, who incorporated parts of Cavendish's account in his second edition of the *Chronicles* (1587) (cf. Sylvester 271n1).

¹¹² In *King Henry VIII* explicit scepticism about Henry's rationale is voiced in court: when the Lord Chamberlain repeats the official explanation that "marriage with his brother's wife / Has crept too near his conscience" (2.2.15-16), Suffolk retaliates: "No, his conscience / Has crept too near another lady" (2.2.17).

Shakespeare Theatre in 1983, two years after her performance of Hermione in the same location.

Catherine of Aragon had been married to King Henry VIII for twenty years when Henry sought a divorce. In a letter to the Pope, the Pope's legate Lorenzo Campeggio reported that having been informed of what was obliquely referred to as 'the King's great matter,' Catherine had begged him to ask the king "to remove this *fantasy* [the illegitimacy of their marriage] from his Holiness and to regard her as his consort as she had been till now" (Luke 349, my emphasis). If Hermione's recognition "My life stands in the level of your dreams" (3.2.81) resembles Catherine's concern about her husband's 'fantasy,' Hermione's performance in court and the rhetoric of her defence recall in almost verbatim manner Cavendish's recording of the incident and Shakespeare's version of it in *King Henry VIII*.¹¹³ Before I cite the relevant passages, I would like to mention two more circumstances that substantiate my argument. Firstly, Catherine, like Hermione in the play, was popular with the people, to whom she embodied the ideal of womanhood. George Cavendish refers to her as "a perfect Grysheld," the legendary patient woman of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (35), while Juan Luis Vives dedicated the 1523 edition of his *Instruction of a Christen Woman* to her, acknowledging Catherine as his model of an exemplary woman. In fact, the public support for Catherine's cause was so strong that Henry eventually felt obliged to defend his actions in a public speech in November 1528. Similarly, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* publicly expresses his wish to "be cleared / Of being tyrannous" (3.2.4-5) before the trial begins. In this context it is interesting to note that even in *King Henry VIII*, a providential account of history that ostensibly seems to reinstate Elizabeth, and through her, James as legitimate successors to the English throne, it is the Catholic queen that emerges as the real heroine of the play. As Walter Cohen observes: "The innocent and virtuous Katherine is given a strength of character, consequent impressiveness, and a spiritual coronation absent both from Holinshed's portrayal and from her successor, Anne" (3115). A short extract from the play that could equally well have been taken from *The Winter's Tale* should suffice to illustrate this:

NORFOLK: He counsels a divorce – a loss of her
That like a jewel has hung twenty years
About his neck, yet never lost her lustre;
Of her that loves him with that excellence
That angels love good men with; even of her

¹¹³ In *The Crown of Life*, Knight notes that the "calm yet condemnatory scorn of Hermione's manner shows a close equivalence to that of Queen Katharine on trial in *Henry VIII*" (93). More recently, Gordon McMullan has pointed to the generic and iconographic similarities between *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII*, arguing that "the principal connection made between the two plays is the apparent similarity of the plays' spurned and rejected queens ... as they react to their parallel situations as victims of cruel, self-obsessed husbands" (*King* 119).

That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,
Will bless the King – and is not this course pious?

CHAMBERLAIN: ... 'Tis most true –
These news are everywhere – every tongue speaks
 'em,
And every true heart weeps for't. (*King Henry VIII* 2.2.29-38)

Secondly, Catherine, like Hermione, is the daughter of a foreign emperor, King Ferdinand of Spain. While for Catherine the circumstance that she is a “straynger born of ye domynyon” essentially means that she is deprived of receiving an “Indifferent [impartial] Councell” (Cavendish 80), the ‘strangeness’ from Leontes’ realm becomes Hermione’s only assurance that “The flatness of my misery” might elsewhere be seen “with eyes / Of pity, not revenge” (3.2.122-23). Facing the loss of their queenhood, both Hermione and Catherine draw their strength and identity from the fact that they still are, after all, the daughters of a king. In *Henry VIII*, this conflict is expressed through the way Katherine switches from using the first person singular to using the royal plural in her speech:

I am about to weep; but, thinking that
We are queen, or long have dreamed so, certain
The daughter of a king, my drops of tears
I'll turn to sparks of fire. (2.4.68-71)

Each queen, Laird observes, “acknowledges the king’s authority even as she protests the illusion that holds her hostage” (35). Both are bent on defending their innocence by professing their ignorance of any trespass. Both draw attention to their past conduct and present hardship, their status as wife, mother and daughter, putting it to the king’s conscience “whether it be true or no” (Cavendish 81). In order to fully illustrate these points and to make a comparison easier, in the following I have placed Cavendish’s original account of this scene on the left and Shakespeare’s on the right:

Syr/q^d she/ I beseeche you for all the loves
that hathe byn bytween vs And for the love
of god/ lett me have Iustice & right / take
of me some pitie & compassion / for I
ame a poore woman and a Straynger borne
owte of yo^r domynyon / I have here no
assured frendes / And much lesse
Indifferent Councell / I flee to you as the
hed Iustice w^t in this realme / Alas sir
where In have I offendyd you / or what
occasion of displeasure have I deserved
ayenst yo^r wyll or pleasure/entendyng (as I
perceyve) to put me frome you / I take

Since what I am about to say, must be but
that / Which contradicts my accusation....
You, my lord, best know / (Who least will
seem to do) my past life / Hath been as
continent, as chaste, as true, / As I am
now unhappy.... For behold me, / A
fellow of the royal bed, which owe / a
moiety of the throne, a great king’s
daughter, / The mother to a hopeful
prince, here standing / To prate and talk
for life and honour.... I appeal / To your
own conscience, sir, ... how I was in your
grace, / How merited to be so....: if one

god & all the world to wytnes that I have
 byn to you a trewe humble and obedyent
 wyfe / ever confirmable to yo^r wyll and
 pleasure that never sayed or dyd any thyng
 to the contrarye therof / beyng allwyes
 wellpleased dalyaunce / ... I loved all thos
 whome ye loved / oonly for yo^r sake/
 whether I had cause or no / and whether
 they ware my ffrendes or my ennemyes /
 this xx^{ti} yeres I have byn yo^r wyfe ... /
 And whether it be true or no I put it to yo^r
 concyence / Yf there be any Iust cause by
 the lawe that ye can allegge ayenst me
 other of dishonestie or any other
 Impedyme^t to banysshe & put me frome
 you / I am well content to departe to my
 great shame & dishonour ... And if ye will
 not extend to me so myche Indifferent
 ffavor / your pleasure than be fullfilled /
 And to god I commyt my case ...
 (Cavendish 80-82)

jot beyond / The bound of honour, or in
 act or will / That way inclining, harden'd
 be the hearts / Of all that hear me.... For
 Polixenes ... I do confess I lov'd him ...
 with a love, even such, / So, and no other,
 as yourself commanded: / Which, not to
 have done, I think had been in me / Both
 disobedience and ingratitude / To you ...
 if I shall be condemn'd / Upon surmises,
 all proofs sleeping else / But what your
 jealousies awake, I tell you / 'Tis rigour
 and not law. Your honours all, / I do refer
 me to the Oracle:/ Apollo be my judge! ...
 The Emperor of Russia was my father: /
 O that he were alive, ... that he did but see
 / The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
 / Of pity, not revenge!
 (WT 3.2.22-123)

In a trial turned drama “devis’d / And play’d to take spectators” (3.2.36-37), both queens find themselves literally and metaphorically subjected to a foreign tongue, a language, as Hermione states, “that I understand not” (3.2.80), but to which they are still willing to sacrifice their life if not their honour: “My life stands in the level of your dreams, / Which I’ll lay down” (3.2.81-82).

Of Catherine of Aragon it is known that she not only verbally but also physically challenged the protocol of “an event scripted to bring about her destruction” (Noling 296). Her behaviour in court was so startlingly “incontinent” that it has been recorded in scenic detail in all historic reports of the trial (Cavendish 80).¹¹⁴ Even the First Folio, generally marked by the absence of stage directions, offers a substantial set of these for *Henry VIII*, and especially for this scene, closely following the original accounts. I will here again quote Cavendish’s account: not only is his version chronologically closest to the actual historical event, but it is also the most dramatically embellished. The scene is the opening of the trial, the court has assembled, everyone has taken their place, the judge has read the commission. The Crier calls for the King of England and Henry acknowledges his presence:

... than he called also the quene / by the name of katheren quen of Englund
 come into the Court / &^{cc} / who made no answer to the same / but rose vppe
 incontynent ... owt of hir chayer where as she satt / And bycause she cowld
 not come dyrectly to the kyng / for the distaunce w^{che} severed theme / she toke

¹¹⁴ According to the *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (1587), the term means: “without moderation, vnchastly, ...disorderly, without government” (“Incontinenter, adv.”).

payn to goo aboutht vnto the kyng knelyng down at his feete / in the sight of
all the Courte & assemble / To whome she sayd in effect / in broken
Englysshe as folowyth / ... (Cavendish 80)

Kim Noling has drawn attention to the fact that Catherine here uses her physical position to maintain her political one, consciously rejecting the court choreography that allocates her off-centre (cf. 294). When she circumvents the court in order to get to Henry's throne that stands in a central position above the one occupied by her judges, "she likewise tries to circumvent the cardinals' jurisdiction by making a personal appeal to the real seat of power" (Noling 294). It is this action, this performance that enables Catherine to upstage her judges and to reclaim, at least temporarily, what Hermione calls the "moiety of the throne" (3.2.38), the portion of the throne that belongs to the king's wife, even though, as Noling rightly points out, she is "blatantly denied a share of its political power" (294). Hampered by an insufficient command of the English language, Catherine thus chooses to compensate her verbal handicap with a visual appeal that not only forces Henry to acknowledge her presence, but also leaves him speechless for the length of her argument.

Although no such stage directions are included either explicitly or implicitly in the text of *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione repeatedly addresses Leontes directly, insisting that he 'behold her' in her present state: "A fellow to the royal bed, which owe a moiety of the throne, a great king's daughter, / The mother to a hopeful prince, here standing / To prate and talk for life and honour" (3.2.38-41). In the 1998/99 RSC production directed by Doran, Hermione claims her share of the throne in a similar manner when she leaves her 'prisoner's dock' to confront the king, who has so far avoided looking at her. Finding that her argument is rendered impotent by Leontes' increasingly hysterical insistence on the referentiality of his imagination ("Your actions are my dreams" [3.2.83]), Gilbreath's Hermione literally turns her back on Sher's Leontes and walks down centre stage in a way that resembles Catherine's famous exit. In Cavendish's account, Catherine, after having committed her case to God, who, she adds as a parting shot, "is the [only] Iuste Iudge around,"

... rose vppe ... / And so departed from thence / Supposed that she wold have
resortyd agayn to hir former place / but she toke hir direct way owt of the howsse
... / And the kyng beyng advertysed of hir departure commaundyd the Crier to
call hir agayn ... / on on/ q^d she/ it ... makes no matter / for it is no Indifferent
Court for me / therefore I wyll not tary / ... / And thus she departyd owt of that
Court w^tout any further Answere at that tyme or at any other nor wold never
appere in any Court after.... (Cavendish 82)

In Doran's production, Hermione similarly gains a central position downstage the moment she rejects Leontes' capacity to pass sentence on her honour. Visually eclipsing the king as focal

(and thus implicitly judicial) point of reference, her appeal for justice is directly addressed to the audience, the ‘real’ seat of power. The vantage point from which she speaks turns Hermione’s personal assessment into a truism about the fallibility of what is in effect not divine but human justice.¹¹⁵

... if I shall be condemn’d
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
‘Tis rigour and not law. Your honours all,
I do refer me to the Oracle:
Apollo be my judge! (3.2.111-16)

3.2.3 Towards a Gracious Issue

The deity that is called upon to shed light on the obscure proceedings at the Sicilian court is not an unproblematic one, however. Hermione’s case, after all, is to be decided not on ocular but on oracular proof. As patron god of the oracle at Delphos, Apollo’s divinations are notoriously subject to human (mis)interpretation.¹¹⁶ Although Shakespeare, as Kenneth Bennett has maintained, is careful to establish the authority and “elevated benignity” of the oracle in the brief scene that interrupts the display of Leontes’ tyrannical vindictiveness (84), its commonplace association with “ambiguity, obscurantism, equivocation, and verbal trickery” cannot be brushed aside that easily (Felperin 38). Thus, when trying to explicate what he calls “*amphibologia*; ... the Ambiguous, or Figure of Sense Uncertain,” Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie* situates such “vicious speech” in the same mythological context that Shakespeare invokes in *The Winter’s Tale* (345-46, 345): “These doubtful speeches were used much in the old times by their false prophets as appeareth by the oracles of Delphos and of the Sybils’ prophecies devised by the religious persons of those days to abuse the superstitious people, and to encumber their busy brains with vain hope or vain fear” (346). Although the intelligence issued by the oracle is without substance, that is, without a secure set of referents, its unruly effect on civil order, Puttenham warns, may be substantive: “by the comfort of those blind

¹¹⁵ Katherine expresses a similar conviction in *Henry VIII* when she reminds the cardinals that “Heaven is above all yet – there sits a judge / That no king can corrupt” (3.1.100-01).

¹¹⁶ Croesus, king of Lydia (c. 560-546 BC), famously lost his decisive battle against the Persian king Cyrus because he misinterpreted the oracular message from Delphi (cf. Ure and Hornblower). In this context it is also interesting to note that interpretation and mediation, activities which cause so many problems in the first half of *The Winter’s Tale*, were nevertheless regarded as essential rituals in the oracular consultation: the supreme wisdom of the divinity only ever reached the ear of the questioning mortal via the mediating and interpretative activity of his priestesses (the Pythia) and his priests (the prophetai) (cf. Sourvinou-Inwood).

prophecies many insurrections and rebellions have been stirred up in this realm” (346). Closer to the present context, the unruly ambiguity of the oracular is fashioned in opposition to the stabilising univocality of the sovereign voice in King James’ first speech to parliament:

... it becommeth a King, in my opinion, to vse no other Eloquence then plainness and sinceritie. By plainnesse I meane, that his Speeches should be so cleare and voyd of all ambiguitie, that they may not be throwne, nor rent asunder in contrary sences like the old Oracles of the Pagan gods. And by sinceritie, I vnderstand that vprightnesse and honestie which ought to be in a Kings whole Speeches and actions: That as farre as a King is in Honour erected above any of his Subiects, so farre should he strive in sinceritie to be above them all, and that his tongue should be ever the trew Messenger of his heart: and this sort of Eloquence may you ever assuredly looke for at my hands. (*King* 146)

In her topical or ‘local’ reading of Shakespearean drama, Leah Marcus suggests that with King James I’s accession to the English throne, the carefully cultivated ambiguity of political intent under Elizabeth was replaced by what the king liked to portray as the clarity and legibility of his royal purpose.¹¹⁷ In his proclamations James assured his Parliament that with his words he presented them with a “Mirror, or Christall, as through the transparantnesse thereof, you may see the heart of your King” (*King* 179). James, Marcus maintains, was essentially an “author-king” whose rule was based on an idea of an absolute authorial prerogative (*Puzzling* 113): “Like his editorial assistants, King James saw himself as performing the patient authorial task of collecting meaning, arranging it, beating back the political and moral chaos of unregulated signification in order to forge diverse materials into ‘one Body’” (*Puzzling* 113). The model for such ‘plainnesse’ is exemplified by James’ *Basilikon Doron*, a “birth of mine,” the king maintains, that “is at the least rightly proportioned in all the members, without any monstrous deformitie in any of them” (11). Like James, Leontes, as I have tried to argue, is on a crusade to control unruly discourse, to eradicate the threat of unregulated signification that for him assumes material shape in the ‘grotesque’ belly of his pregnant wife. Whereas James’ absolutist ‘labour’ produces ‘rightly proportioned offspring,’ however, – a self-consistent and transparent style that intends to reflect the integrity of his political action – Leontes’ disproportionate ravings merely serve to procreate and propagate ‘monstrous offspring’ that threatens sanity and rule. Although Leontes’ rejection of oracular proof as “mere falsehood” (3.2.141) is thus consistent with what Felperin has identified as a “long-standing literary expectation of deceit from pagan sources” (39), in the world of the play this rejection is issued by a king whose “stylistically ornate hallucinations” are far from ‘plain’ in the Jamesian sense (Desmet 107). On the

¹¹⁷ See Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), esp. 111-14.

contrary, where the king speaks in destabilising riddles, the oracular asserts itself as the stable referent of truth.¹¹⁸

This new authority is already posited in the short scene that precedes the trial. The invocation of the “fire-rob’d god, / Golden Apollo” (4.3.28-29) casts a sunny spell of hope on the tragic trajectory of the play. In a thematic and structural parallel to the opening scene of the play, the birth imagery that was used in the exchange between the two courtiers paves the way for a new turn of events at the beginning of the third act. The “gracious ... issue” that will “rush to knowledge” once the seal that contains the divine message is broken and the “contents discover[ed]” (3.1. 22, 21, 20), is clearly established as an antidote to the impotent destructiveness of Leontes’ “foul issue” (2.3.152). Accordingly, the message that is eventually delivered by this “most plain-spoken and un-Delphic Delphic oracle” could not have been more crystal-clear (Felperin 39): “Hermione is chaste; Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found” (3.2.132-36).¹¹⁹ It is the god of *logos* himself that re-scripts this sad tale of winter with a dramatic ‘issue’ that reads like a *dramatis personae* list complete with a rudimentary plot.¹²⁰ Such providential theatre, however, is rejected by the ‘Player King’ who persists in prolonging the tragic mode: “There is no truth at all i’t’h’ Oracle” (3.2.140). And yet by refusing to ‘know himself,’ to acknowledge the supreme judgement of this “spiritual counsel” which, as he had declared earlier, “Shall stop or spur me” (2.1.186,

¹¹⁸ Although for Felperin the “issue of divine control” in *The Winter’s Tale* is problematised by the fact that Apollo’s words are separated from “their sacred and authenticating voice,” in my opinion this absence only further emphasises the substantial and substantiating role language assumes in a play where (in contrast to *Pericles*) the very presence of the speaker does not prevent misunderstanding, something of which Leontes has given ample proof (43). Note, for example, the reactions of incomprehension that follow his speeches in the first half of the play, such as: “What means Sicilia?” (1.2.147), or Hermione’s “You speak a language that I understand not” (3.2.80).

¹¹⁹ The relative ambiguity of the oracular pronouncement has been subject to a wide variety of critical responses. In Greene’s *Pandosto*, Shakespeare’s source, the oracle reads: “SUSPICION IS NO PROOF: JEALOUSY IS AN UNEQUAL JUDGE: BELLARIA IS CHASTE: EGISTUS BLAMELESS: FRANION A TRUE SUBJECT: PANDOSTO TREACHEROUS: HIS BABE AN INNOCENT: AND THE KING SHALL LIVE WITHOUT AN HEIR, IF THAT WHICH IS LOST BE NOT FOUND” (196, capitalisation in original). While Felperin is right when he draws attention to the fact that Shakespeare “makes even more explicit and unequivocal the pronouncements of his source” (40), I believe that Jane Donawerth also has a point when she argues that the prophetic part of the pronouncement in Shakespeare’s version is not as unambiguous as it may seem (cf. 124). Comparing the two versions, Donawerth notes that even though the words are the same, the story is changed, something that adds multiple meanings to ‘that which is lost’ and found at the end of *The Winter’s Tale* (cf. 124).

¹²⁰ Several critics have noted the resemblance between Apollo (who is, among other things, the god of poetry) and the Judeo-Christian God who works through the word. See, for example, Knight 92, and Hunt, “Modern” 85.

187), Leontes ironically corroborates the validity of the oracular pronouncement:¹²¹ he is indeed the jealous tyrant who puts personal will above divine law.

Healing purification and wisdom, qualities Apollo is also associated with, does not come without a cost. The “Apollonian (anti-) theatre of absolute knowledge” (Bishop 148) finally only manages to punctuate Leontes’ fiction of himself as “superman of goodness and wisdom” through a dramatic counter-action that deprives Leontes (like Pericles before him) both of ‘air’ and an ‘heir’ (Knight 86). In performance, thunderclaps usually accompany Leontes’ denouncement of the oracle, a stage practice that gives audible shape to Cleomenes’ description of the “ear-deaf’ning voice o’ th’ oracle ... [that] so surprised my sense, / That I was nothing” (3.1.9).¹²² Similarly, the indelible finality of Mamillius’ ensuing death confronts Leontes with a material ‘nothing’ that causes his world of words, the ‘something’ (cf. 1.2.284-96) on which his case rests, to fold up like a house of cards. Regardless of the ‘real’ cause of Mamillius’ death, what matters for the ensuing development of the play is that Leontes is convinced that a causal connection between his profanity and his son’s fatal illness exists: “Apollo’s angry, and the heavens themselves / Do strike at my injustice” (3.2.146-47).¹²³ As Carolyn Asp contends: “Only a supernatural, suprarational force can strike the blow that will break through the fortress of Leontes’ blind self-will” (153). And a blow it is: Leontes’ apperception of the oracular pronouncement is often staged as if he receives a minor stroke, something that medically, at least, ties in neatly with the many references to disturbed or aching hearts in this scene and also serves to recall his initial problem with a ‘dancing heart.’¹²⁴ While the fatal news of his son’s demise and Hermione’s ensuing collapse rain down on him, Leontes is usually shown to be crouching low or lying prostrate on the ground where, at least in Doran’s production, he remains, while Paulina with “considered vehemence” – to use Knight’s apt oxymoron (94) – tells him that all that there is left for him to do is to “betake thee/ To *nothing* but despair” (3.2.209-10, my emphasis). Confronted with the “fabric of his folly” (1.2.429) Leontes, as Laird has pointed out, “must endure the dissolution of the social and political identity in terms of which he had earlier understood and defended his performance” (36). The play has come to the “dead end of epistemophilia” (Platt 159); there is only air left for a ‘bitter tongue’ (cf. 3.2.216) like Paulina’s that utters “words as medicinal, as true” (2.3.37).

¹²¹ ‘Know thyself’ is the famous injunction of the Delphic oracle.

¹²² Examples include the RSC productions directed by Terry Hands (1986), Adrian Noble (1992) and Gregory Doran (1998/99).

¹²³ Again, this interpretation is in accordance with the literary convention. In Sophocles’ *Antigone*, an interesting dramatic antecedent to *The Winter’s Tale*, for example, Creon, the ruler of Thebes, is punished for hubris by the sudden loss of his son. The news of her son’s death causes Creon’s wife, Eurydice, to kill herself. A broken man, Creon blames himself for everything that has happened.

¹²⁴ See, for example, 2.3.205; 3.2.2, 52, 150, 196, 221-22.

The post-catastrophic scenario that Paulina envisages for the penitent king is diametrically opposed to the pastoral bliss of eternal boyhood with which the play opened. The bleating lambs frisking in the sun have been replaced by an almost Dantesque purgatorial landscape of “barren mountain, and still winter / In storm perpetual” (3.2.212-13). Stasis and loss prevail in this quintessential tale of winter where Leontes, as Charles Frey has pointed out, is iconographically fixed in the posture of the churchyard man (cf. 2.1.29-30), the very man who featured in Mamillius’ ‘tale interrupted’ (cf. 115). As Laird sums it up: “In the theatre of kingship, the player king is found guilty and sentenced to a ‘shame perpetual’” (36). With the chastened rhetoric that characterises all Shakespeare’s ‘post-traumatic’ romantic protagonists, Leontes accepts the ‘doctrine of his ill-doing’ and resigns himself to a daily act of penance at the chapel where he believes his wife and son to be entombed.

3.3 Tragi-Comic Creations

Like an old tale still, which will have matter
to rehearse, though credit be asleep and not an ear
open. (*WT* 5.2.62-64)

At this point in the play, events seem to have reached rock bottom. And yet, interestingly enough, a supplementary (or, as some critics would argue, superfluous) scene featuring a shipwreck, a ghostly apparition, a bear, a foundling, a shepherd and a clown is tagged on to the tale’s tragic ending. Whereas to an earlier generation of Shakespeare scholars such as Arthur Quiller-Couch this was a sign of careless workmanship,¹²⁵ critics since have been at pains to re-discover the so-called bear-episode as a crafty piece of stage-management.¹²⁶ The economic brevity of the scene, its “naked, disillusioning dramaturgy” is indeed remarkable (Colie 267). In the space of 132 lines, the focus of the play shifts from the restricted confines of the Sicilian court to the open wilderness of Bohemia, from a tragic and realist mode to a pastoral one where, at least ostensibly, the thematic concern is not so much with “things dying” but with “things new born” (3.3.112-13). In any case, the transition is a notoriously clamorous one, effected as it is by the startling appearance of a bear that chases Antigonus off the stage to “din[e] on the gentleman” (3.3.105) amidst the cries of drowning mariners. Much has been

¹²⁵ Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, *Notes on Shakespeare’s Workmanship* (New York: Holt, 1917), see esp. 262-64.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Nevill Coghill “Six Points of Stage-Craft in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958): 31-41; Dennis Biggins “‘Exit Pursued by a Beare’: A Problem in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 13 (1962): 3-13; Andrew Gurr “The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 420-25; Dale B. J. Randall, “‘This is the Chase’: Or, the Further Pursuit of Shakespeare’s Bear,” *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 121 (1985): 89-95.

made of the bear in the critical reception of the play, with critics variously pouncing upon the manner of its staging (real or counterfeit), its allegorical importance and its function as a pivotal agent of transition, be it from winter to spring, or from one generic mode to another.¹²⁷ Although all these pursuits promise many equally bizarre and rewarding encounters, I would like to hold the thematic chase for a moment in order to pursue a more affective one.¹²⁸ The unexpected appearance of the bear at midpoint remains as inexplicable as Leontes' sudden fit of jealousy at the beginning of the play. Its 'overbearing' presence cannot be explained away by reference to either its symbolic significance or a growing demand for theatrical variety. As a dramatic misfit, the bear literally rips apart a hitherto consistent tragic (t)issue, cutting in upon Antigonus' narrative with its disruptive theatricality. Since 'disproportionate matters' have been haunting this study in various guises, I would like to take a closer look at this 'eccentric' stage direction and its effect on the group of bodies that, besides Antigonus, is directly exposed to what Neville Coghill has described as a "*frisson* of horror" that mingles the terrible and the grotesque (35). Although critics differ from each other in defining the exact nature of emotion that is evoked, there seems to be a general agreement on its unsettling effect. Thus, Randall maintains that the bear on stage "is and always has been a means of shocking us" (89) while Gurr emphasises its "drastic effect" ("Bear" 423). Reacting against the claim that the bear episode is not meant to be taken seriously, Dennis Biggins problematises the fact that audience response to this scene varies with the manner of its staging, but still finds it possible to conclude that a contemporary audience "would react seriously rather than uproariously to Antigonus and the bear" (7). It is of course impossible to determine once and for all how an early modern audience would have reacted to these scenes, a problem that is exacerbated by the fact that the only contemporary review, Simon Forman's account of 1611, mentions neither bear nor statue, the *coups de théâtre* that have become the focus of criticism today. But as Cooper reminds us in her study on *The English Romance in Time*, for a Jacobean audience the bear would have been a well-known romantic motif: in 1610, around the time that *The Winter's Tale* was having its debut, the King's Men, for example, also performed the hugely popular romance *Mucedorus* (first printed 1598), a

¹²⁷ In addition to the commentators mentioned above, see Michael Bristol's "In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economics in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 145-167, for an approach that, according to Bristol, investigates the "manifold symbolic functions of this device [the bear] and its specific function as a significant marker of spatiotemporal form" that characterises the play as a whole (159).

¹²⁸ Bristol's description of contemporary notions about bear reproduction is particularly intriguing in this respect. According to Bristol, in folkloristic as well as scientific accounts of the period, the she-bear is described as a polymorphous figure that is able to reproduce without the involvement of a male. The she-bear simply licks a formless mass of her own bodily secretions into whelp-shape. This "grotesque inversion of the normal birth process" provides another contribution to the theme of bizarre conceptions in the play ("In Search" 160).

play that opens by having its heroine ‘Enter ... pursued with a bear’ (Cooper 2). Shakespeare’s use of the bear would thus create a certain “horizon of expectations” (Jauss 23) that would be shaped by the audience’s familiarity with resonances and assumptions of romance, the “pulp fiction of the Tudor age” (Cooper 3).¹²⁹ Taking up Dale B. Randall’s idea that the bear episode provides a “fulcrum of shock, on either side of which the mainly tragic and mainly comic parts of the play are counterpoised,” I want to argue that the deliberate employment of this seemingly crude theatrical device not only serves to highlight questions of genre and decorum, it also affectively and effectively co-opts the audience into the tragicomic metabolism of the play (90).

Melancholy, ‘affection’ and the monstrous, terms that have shaped my discussion of the play so far, assume a key role in a controversy concerning the viability of a new, distinctly modern genre to appear on the theatrical scene in late sixteenth-century Italy. Neither comedy nor tragedy, Battista Guarini’s pastoral tragicomedy, *Il pastor fido* (first circulated in 1589, an English translation was published anonymously in 1602), became the much disputed prototype for a genre of a third kind, a hybrid species that amalgamated tragic and comic properties into a unified whole.¹³⁰ Writing to defend himself against the accusation that any such ‘miscegenation’ “constitute[s] a ‘monstrous’ offense to classical decorum and ... confuse[s] the didactic principles of each genre,” the Italian playwright, diplomat and professor of rhetoric published what became the first theoretical treatise in support of tragicomedy, the *Compendio*

¹²⁹ The notion of literary ‘horizon of expectations’ was introduced by literary historian and theorist Hans Robert Jauss in the 1960s to suggest that an understanding of a literary work is inevitably determined by collective assumptions (genre conventions and cultural ideologies) shared by texts and readers. Thus, as Jauss puts it in his chapter on “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory”: “A literary work, even if it seems new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very definite type of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, rings the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the ‘middle and end,’ which can then be maintained intact, changed, reoriented or even fulfilled ironically in the course of reading according to certain rules of the genre or type of text.... The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, changed or even just reproduced. Variation and correction determine the scope, whereas alteration and reproduction determine the borders of a genre-structure” (23).

¹³⁰ I am particularly indebted to Robert Henke’s *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare’s Late Plays* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997) for a comprehensive survey of Guarini’s contribution to the development of drama in the early modern period. For a discussion of tragicomedy in the early modern context see also the very informative collection of essays in Nancy Maguire’s *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics* (New York: AMS, 1987); Joan Hartwig, *Shakespeare’s Tragicomic Vision* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1972); Eugene M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (Hamden: Archon, 1969); and the section on “Tragicomedy” in the *Dictionary of Literary-Rhetorical Conventions of the English Renaissance*, ed. Marjorie Donker and George M. Muldrow (Westport: Greenwood, 1982) 229-233.

della poesia tragicomica (1601) (Henke 22).¹³¹ Fascinatingly, Guarini explicates dramatic form within an ethics of human physiology rather than by formal characteristics or subject matter. Bestowing particular importance on the affective responses each genre elicits in the theatre audience, Guarini comes to the conclusion that a delight in “horrible and savage spectacles” is no longer adequate for the sensibilities of his age (523). Equating modern with the moderation of extremes, Guarini propagates tragicomedy as generically more refined than either tragedy or comedy since it “does not allow hearers to fall into excessive tragic melancholy or comic relaxation” (512). Far from representing an indecorous offspring – the medieval English “mongrel tradi-comedie” that Sir Philip Sidney complains about in his *Defence of Poetry* (1595) – tragicomedy of the type Guarini envisions is thus explicitly compared to the well-tempered body propagated by the humoral regime of the early modern period, a body purged and winnowed of excess (114).¹³² Tragicomic drama is, in Guarini’s words, “of the most excellent form and composition, not merely fully corresponding to the mixture of the human body, which consists entirely in the tempering of the four humors, but much more noble than simple tragedy and simple comedy ... which are at fault because they go to excess” (512). Guarini’s own dramatic sample, *Il pastor fido*, is thus praised as “a poem reasonable, properly proportioned, and ... a true son of art and legitimate according to the rules of Aristotle” (Guarini 530). Interestingly, the drift of Guarini’s argument refigures in Shakespeare’s own generic hybrid, most explicitly in the famous art versus nature debate between Polixenes and Perdita that takes place in the play’s ‘engrafted’ second half. Defending the hybridiser’s art, Polixenes argues that the purpose of cross-fertilization is to “conceive a bark of baser kind / By bud of nobler race” (4.4.94-95). While Perdita expresses her disdain of a process that creates “nature’s bastards” (4.4.83), Polixenes cherishes it as an “art / Which does mend nature” (4.4.95-96). He is careful, however, to point out that this process of refinement inherently natural since “The art itself is nature” (4.4.97), just as Guarini argues that his dramatic hybrid is not composed “in opposition to the practice of nature, and much less to that of art” (509). This positive stance on literary genetics is visibly (if not dramatically) supported by another contemporary playwright. The anatomisation of genre that embellishes the frontispiece of the First Folio of Ben Jonson’s *Works* suggests that tragicomedy in early

¹³¹ For an easily accessible (albeit incomplete) translation see Guarini’s “The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry,” in Allan H. Gilbert, *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (New York: American Book, 1940), 505-33.

¹³² For a discussion of temperance as the central ethical virtue for the Renaissance see Michael C. Schoenfeldt’s *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). On the function of temperance in the dramatic context see James J. Yoch’s “The Renaissance Dramatization of Temperance: The Italian Revival of Tragicomedy and *The Faithful Shepherdess*,” in *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics*, ed. Nancy Klein Maguire (New York: AMS, 1987) 115-38.

seventeenth-century England had established itself not only as the natural and legitimate offspring of tragedy and comedy, but also as their refined successor. Depicted as human

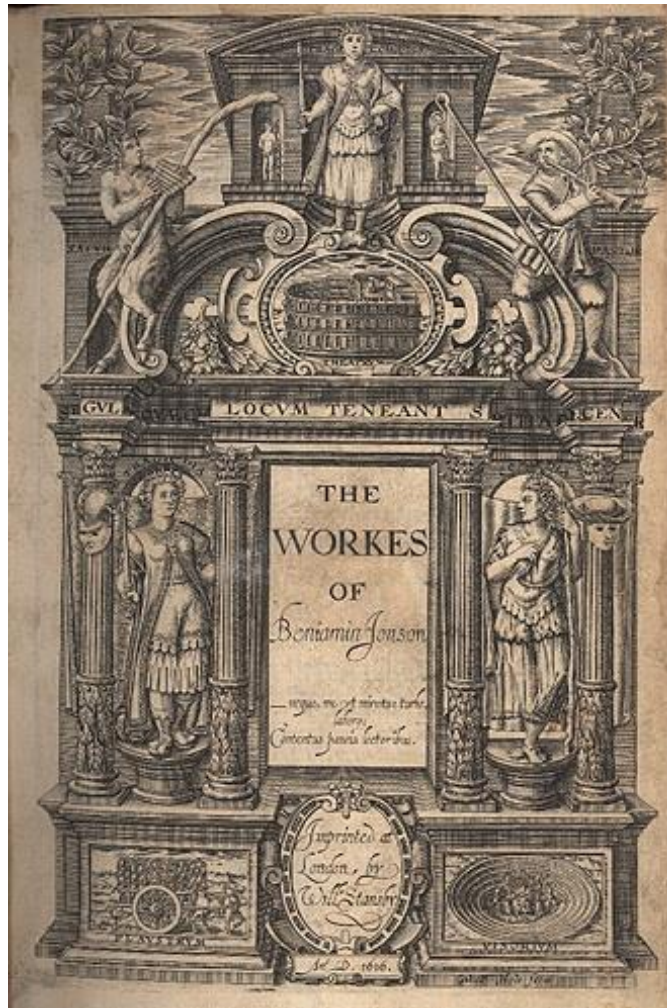


Fig. 2. William Hole's engraving for the title page of Ben Jonson's *Works* (London, 1616).

figures, tragedy, comedy and tragicomedy in William Hole's engraving occupy different positions within an architectural design. 'Tragoedia' and 'Comoedia' are situated between the columns that support a triumphal arch, at the top of which stands 'Tragicomoedia'.¹³³ Like Perdita's 'streaked gillyvor' (cf. 4.4.82), therefore, tragicomedy on Jonson's title page is visibly shaped by the attributes of both generic parents. Iconographically this new generic prodigy presides "over the entire fabric of drama, as she faces eagerly forward, poised on a scroll in front of a niche which she has clearly outgrown." (Waith 45).

The point of this excursion into early modern dramatic theory is not to show that *The Winter's Tale* is a pastoral tragicomedy of the type Guarini envisioned – the modal interactions in the play are not as 'tempered' as they are in the Italian role-model and, contrary to Guarini's

¹³³ For a more detailed analysis of the illustration, see Henke 13-16; and Waith 45-47.

precepts, deaths do occur.¹³⁴ Rather, it is to suggest that the “tragical-comical-historical-pastoral . . . poem unlimited” that is still a laughing matter in *Hamlet* (2.2.381-82) has gained serious dramatic viability only a decade later. The most distinct evidence that Italian theory and practice was taken up by English playwrights is found in the work of Shakespeare’s colleague and future collaborator John Fletcher, who prefixed a direct reference to Guarini’s theoretical writings to the 1609-10 edition of his pastoral tragicomedy *The Faithful Shepherdess*.¹³⁵ In his study with the suggestive title *Pastoral Transformations*, Henke posits that Guarini’s theorising paved the way for other playwrights to envision generic kinds not as “fixed forms but as the very *materials* of dramaturgical creation, exploitable for transformation by various combinatory strategies” (75, emphasis in the original). An appreciation of Shakespeare’s play in the context of contemporary theatrical developments thus helps to clarify the way in which Shakespeare experiments with conventional generic syndromes to develop what Peter G. Platt calls a unique “‘dramatics’ of wonder,” a poetics of tragicomic spectacle that culminates in the visual tableau of the statue scene at the end of the play (153).

As a genre for its time, late-sixteenth-century tragicomedy not only emerges in response to the attitudes and sensibilities of its particular audience, it is also geared for their particular malaise, “purging men’s minds of those passions that are caused in us by labors both private and public” (Guarini 514). Not surprisingly, the passion that needs to be cleared out of men’s [sic!] system is melancholy, an “affetto tanto nocivo, che bene spesso conduce l’uomo a darsi la morte [emotion so harmful that it often leads men to kill themselves]” (qtd. and transl. by Henke 121). In contrast to the more “savage and offensive spectacle” of tragedy, the architectonic end of which is “the purgation of terror and compassion” (Guarini 515, 514), the tragicomic playwright, like a skilful physician, does not amputate emotion in its entirety but “sol quella parte che traboccando fuor dei termini naturali, corrompe la simetria degli umori” [only that part which, passing beyond natural limits, corrupts the symmetry of the humors]” (qtd. and transl. by Henke 121). This is achieved by administering the right doses of tragedy, a genre that has a constricting effect on the spirit, and comedy, a genre that relaxes and loosens the soul (cf. Guarini 522). The tragicomic playwright, in other words, tunes his dramaturgy to the biophysical rhythms of his audience, modifying and blending tragic and comic modalities so as to purge “with pleasure the sadness of the hearer” (cf. Henke 122; Guarini 524).

Bearing these insights in mind, not only the ominous presence of the bear in *The Winter’s Tale*, but also the peculiarity of the liminal scene as such seems less of a ‘savage’ business. Antigonus’ modulating narrative, a farewell speech addressed to the infant he is about to

¹³⁴ For a particularly helpful account of the distinction between “genre” and “mode,” see Henke 16-19.

¹³⁵ For an overview of the dissemination of Guarini’s ideas in England, see Henke 45-65.

abandon, literally transfigures the immediacy of the tragic events that have taken place in Sicily into the distanced and dematerialised substance of a bad dream (Hermione's ghost-like apparition) in which "the fury [is] spent" (3.3.26). On Bohemian soil, the Clown's laconic account of Antigonus' mortal encounter comically tempers the tragic impact of the savage bear whose very appearance flaunts credulity in the first place. Like Guarini's "rassomiglianze del terribile" – "simulacra of terror," as Henke translates, "that yield less than the full tragic catharsis" (126) – the bear loosens both narrative stringency and tragic emotion insofar as its appearance releases the audience from a too literal-minded melancholic bondage to Leontes' tragic fiction (cf. Bishop 153). Where Guarini advocates temperate modifications, however, Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* prefers shock therapy. "Mixed genres," as Orgel notes, "disturb us," an insight that Shakespeare capitalises on when he exposes his audience to a bewildering succession of spatial, generic and modal discrepancies, a dramatic polyphony that cannot but evoke a complex of responses in his audience (*Winter's* 4). As in *Pericles*, self-conscious theatrics are used to dislocate settled perspectives: the combination of audience engagement and detachment holds conflicting responses in an equilibrium, something that allows the audience to experience multiple points of view at once (cf. Hartwig 176). To put it in a nutshell: the capaciousness of the tragicomic perspective introduced in this scene effectively supplants the narrow, myopic (out)look of Leontes' court. Leaving behind what has been reasonable to the monstrous imagination, we are now ready to accommodate what appears to be "monstrous to our human reason" (5.1.41).

At one stroke, the audience is thus catapulted from the claustrophobic courtrooms of Sicilia to a locale that Palfrey aptly characterises as "a place slightly apart, not beholden to meta-generic expectations" (115). In terms of theatrical formations of space, the self-contained locality of the Sicilian court has given way to what Robert Weimann has identified as a *platea*-like setting,¹³⁶ an "open, fairly undifferentiated place at the frontiers of verisimilitude, rhetoric, and decorum" – in other words, a Bohemian desert with a seacoast (*Author's* 196).¹³⁷ As a

¹³⁶ *Locus* and *platea* comprise the two forms of spatial conventions Weimann finds in use in late medieval drama. Whereas the *locus* represents a specific locale or self-contained representational space in the imaginary world of the play, the *platea* represents an opening in the *mise-en-scène* that takes place at the threshold between the imaginary world-in-the-play and the stage-as-stage; it is a space that explores the limits of dramatic representation (Weimann, *Author's* 181). Far from being simply literal areas, they also represent contrasting ways in which space was used by the performers, and interpreted by the audiences. For a distinction between *locus* and *platea* in the (pre)Shakespearean theatre, see Weimann's *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 73-85.

¹³⁷ Shakespeare's use of geographical setting has provoked "centuries of complaint and specious explanation" (Orgel, *Winter's* 38). In recent years, however, commentators seem to have more or less agreed that by switching the two pastoral settings mentioned in Greene's *Pandosto* (Bohemia and Sicilia) and by giving his Bohemia a seacoast, Shakespeare deliberately advertises his defiance of classical

space that encompasses “the marginal, the visceral, the liminal, the otherwise nonrepresentable,” Shakespeare’s Bohemia provides the right kind of breathing-space or breeding-ground for yet another dramatic oddity that materialises from nowhere to occupy the threshold of the fourth act (Weimann, *Author’s* 196): Time, the Chorus. While its most obvious dramatic function is to bridge the sixteen-year hiatus at the play’s centre – a radical discontinuity in the plot that made any neo-classicist critic’s hair stand on end – Time’s very appearance does away with any surviving illusions of verisimilitude. Like Gower before him, Time is anything but uncomfortable with his anachronistic position in the play. Readily equipped with the necessary emblematic accessories, the hourglass and the wings, Time boldly claims temporal (and) authorial control: “Your patience this allowing, / I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing / As you had slept between” (4.1.15-17). As time incarnate, this choric figure provides a “pivotal image,” as Ewbank notes, “part verbal, part visual, of the Triumph of Time” (“Triumph” 145).¹³⁸

A visible reminder of the play’s debt to Greene’s prose romance which declares itself, in its subtitle, *The Triumph of Time*, Time figures as a literal and literary return to its source the moment the play most radically departs from it. Through his editorial intervention in the ‘unfolding’ of events, Time deflects the bewildering array of theatrical presences into a temporal perspective, making “stale / The glistening of this present” (4.1.13-14) as he ostensibly redirects the focus of the audience toward the narrative trajectory of the play, the story of “A shepherd’s daughter, / And what to her adheres” (4.1.27-28). Paradoxically, however, when *The Winter’s Tale* is re-storied as Time’s tale, the purely theatrical presence of its flamboyant narrator literally remains unaccounted for. As several commentators have pointed out, the plot information provided by this choric figure is redundant, and instead of glossing any temporal ruptures, Time’s very appearance sabotages the notion of unity of time (and space) that he has come to recover in the first place. Far from advancing narrative continuity, therefore, Time creates a spatio-temporal loophole in the play, a time out, as it were, from the inevitability of narrative sequence by means of a speech that relativises the notion of time as one-directional, linear succession:¹³⁹

dramatic precepts. For a brief survey on the ‘Bohemian controversy’ see Orgel’s introduction to the Oxford World’s Classic edition of *The Winter’s Tale* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 37-39.

¹³⁸ As Ewbank points out, the contemporary audience would have been familiar with the figure of Father Time from various artistic media, including emblem books as well as pageants and masques (cf. “Triumph” 146). As the Father of Truth, Time’s mission to ‘unfold error’ could be beneficent as well as destructive (cf. 4.1.2). For an interesting pictorial representation of time in connection with melancholy see Albrecht Dürer’s engraving *Melencolia I* (1514).

¹³⁹ For an illuminating analysis of the play’s “dramaturgical balancing . . . of time’s rhythms with a dramatic and theatrical present” see Stanton B. Garner’s essay on “Time and Presence in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 46 (1985): 347-67.

... it is in my power
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom (4.1.7-9)

In a self-consciously “proleptic momentum” that Ryan finds characteristic of Shakespearean romance as a whole, “immutable laws are unmasked as arbitrary conventions, conquered by the calendar; while ... the human condition itself is exposed as ephemeral ‘custom,’ the fleeting contrivance of a particular culture” (Introduction 17). Time’s multimedial and multitemporal intervention thus amplifies rather than tones down the disruptive theatrical sequence initiated by the vociferous bear: the ‘disproportionate’ presences of both remove attention from the general matter (content) to the manner (form) of artistic creation, flaunting a self-assertive artfulness (that is quite out of the way of nature) before refracting the audience’s vision back to the ‘real world’ of the play. This point was visibly underscored in the emblematic approach taken by the RSC production directed by John Barton and Trevor Nunn in 1976. The actor who had previously represented the bear by wearing an abstract bear-mask and “carrying a staff decorated with human skulls,” reappeared without the mask to deliver Time’s speech (Male 16). As concrete commixture of various fabulous creations, Time inaugurates a new era of mutating bodies and metamorphic theatricality in the play, a phenomenal spectacle which promises to thaw stone-cold rigidities.

3.4 The Return of the Body, or: Bohemian Rhapsody

They that haue seene much more, then I have heard; (for so I am credibly informed)
can relate strange, & almost incredible Comedies of his monstrous disposition ...
(Gabriel Harvey on Robert Greene, *Four Letters* 10)

Released from winter’s contractive fetters, the second half of the play revels in its newly found pastoral freedom, sensually and dynamically captured in Autolycus’ rambling song. At its simplest, the song celebrates nature’s regenerative fecundity and the visceral world of rustic living where “me and my aunts ... lie tumbling in the hay” (4.3.11-12). On a more complex level, it offers us a sneak preview of Shakespeare’s distinctive use of the conventional Arcadian setting. Both in form and content, the metamorphic ambience of Autolycus’ ‘green-room’ does not really foster blissful oblivion. Autolycus’ impressionistic evocation of an “open-skied libertarian world” instead seems to substantiate the very notion of the “bawdy planet” (1.2.201) that has cost Leontes so many sleepless nights (Palfrey 121). In the capaciousness of the pastoral mode – a mode that, as Rosalie Colie writes, “permitted and encouraged opportunities

for mixing in one work ‘imitation’ and ‘invention’” – Leontes’ tropes of indecorum are given, to quote an already familiar line from *Pericles*, ‘repetition to the life’ (243). Presented by a character who is classified as ‘rogue’ in the First Folio’s *dramatis personae* list, Autolycus’ musical overture tunes us in to a pastoral that has more in common with the brothel of Mytilene than the forest of Arden, or, for that matter, to the landscape of pre-sexual innocence invoked by Polixenes at the beginning of the play. A rogue in early modern England belonged to the category of the “thrifless poor” mentioned in Richard Grafton’s *Chronicle at large ... of the affayres of England* (1569) (qtd. in Mowat, “Rogues” 64). According to the 1572 “Acte for the punishment of Vacabondes,” “Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players ... Juglers Pedlers Tynkers & Peyte Chapmen,” persons, in other words, “beynge whole and mightye in Body and able to labour” and yet “havinge not Land or Maister,” were classified as “Roges Vacabondes and Sturdy Beggars,” lazy scroungers dangerous to the well-being of the commonwealth (Gurr, *Shakespearean* 27). Stripped of its poetical gloss, the Bohemian countryside resembles a Rabelaisian carnivalesque world of “licentious beds, aggressive trade, subversive scripts” (Palfrey 117).¹⁴⁰ Laissez-faire Bohemia, as Palfrey remarks, “is the triumph ... of what Leontes so fears: the opened ‘Gates,’ the absent ‘Barricado’ of sexual and economic promiscuity” (121). In marked contrast to the traditional courtly pastorals, the pastoral intrusion in Shakespeare’s late plays is more than a sheep/cheap affair. The romantic idyll is used not as an escapist territory but as a complexly interrogative mode that rebounds again and again on the (corporeal) misrecognitions and improprieties from which it ensues. The radical shift of locale that conventionally initiates the recreative sojourn from the problems set in court is dramatically undermined by the apparent interchangeability of the play’s locations. Switching around the geographical locations of his source, Shakespeare literally reshuffles the parameters of the traditional court-country dialectic: since Sicily, the Theocritean “never-never locale preeminently pastoral” has already been used in the play as background setting for scenes thoroughly non-pastoral, it remains to be seen what its ‘twinned lamb’ Bohemia will hold in store (Colie 270).

The pastoral heart or hard-core of the play is eventually presented to us in form of the famous sheep-shearing scene in act four. Despite its light-hearted tone, a violent sexual subtext is sustained throughout the scene. Most prominent are the much noted mythical allusions to

¹⁴⁰ Readers familiar with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin will note indebtedness to his thought throughout this study. Bakhtin’s sociological analysis of the Renaissance carnival and his related interest in material and bodily becoming does not only open up a ‘dialogue’ between contemporary theory and Shakespearean theatre, his concept of ‘Carnival’ as the culture of the social ‘other’ that “engages with and directly opposes the ‘official’ culture, both in literature and in the public life of the marketplace” provides a particularly fruitful theoretical co-text for the play’s pastoral ‘digression’ (Bristol, *Carnival* 22). Like Bakhtin’s carnival it is “a world of topsy-turvy, of heteroglot exuberance, of ceaseless overrunning and excess where all is mixed, hybrid, ritually degraded and defiled” (Stallybrass and White 8).

rape Florizel invokes to justify his ‘pursuit’ of a shepherd’s daughter, acts of defloration that seem to be metaphorically re-enacted when Perdita, dressed as Flora, distributes her flowers during the festivities.¹⁴¹ As one of the longest scenes of stage presence in the Shakespearean canon (843 lines in the Arden edition), the sheep-shearing scene ventures astray in more than one sense: distraction, not abstraction is the primary operative mode in an environment in which secondary or seemingly redundant matters – Autolycus’ “unconsidered trifles” (4.3.26) – constantly obtrude upon or even occlude the primary love plot. This spatial and temporal freedom to range finds its thematic matrix in the vagabond’s credo “And when I wander here and there, / I then do most go right” (4.3.17-18). With Autolycus’ unauthorised intrusion into the narrative proceedings of the second half – an eye and ear-catching extra not prefigured in *Pandosto* – the play synchronically explodes into a seemingly boundless heteroglossia of various forms of entertainment. Song, dance, masque, feasting or roguery are evoked alongside mythological tales or coney-catching pamphlets.¹⁴² Autolycus, whose name connects him to the thieving lot of classical myth, literally leaves an extensive array of con-literature in his wake when he sells his ‘true’ ballads in print to the credulous rustics.¹⁴³ When looked at diachronically, the artistic appeal of this scene has resulted in a vagrancy of a different sort: as a brief flick through the play’s theatrical history reveals, the sheep-shearing scene repeatedly mutated into a play of its own.¹⁴⁴ And there is more anarchy afoot. On this ‘bawdy planet’ – a manifestation of Leontes’ worst nightmare – uncontained ‘dilation’ breeds social dilution: during the festive exuberance of communal merry-making there seems to be “no mannerly distinguishment ... / Betwixt the prince and beggar” (2.1.86-87). Shepherdesses are “Most

¹⁴¹ Note also how Polixenes’ rhetorically violent ‘seizure’ of Perdita’s body, especially in his speech 4.4.426-42, is in tone and imagery strongly reminiscent of Leontes’ equally misogynistic seizures of Hermione’s. In this context, I find it problematic to endorse Orgel’s view that these repeated allusions to a “compulsive, often bestial male sexuality” acknowledge the fact that “through acts of sexual violence against women – the world is filled with flowers and poetry” (*Winter’s* 45).

¹⁴² See Barbara A. Mowat’s “Rogues, Shepherds, and the Counterfeit Distressed: Text and Infracontext in *The Winter’s Tale* 4.3” in *Shakespeare Studies* 22 (1994): 58-76, for the complex interweaving of printed texts in the play.

¹⁴³ Book 11 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* describes how fourteen-year old Chione is desired both by Apollo and Mercury and, seduced by the one, raped by the other, gives birth to twins. Apollo is the father of Philammon who becomes a famous singer; with Mercury, the patron of thieves, she has “A sonne that hyght *Autolycus*, who proved a wyle pye, / And such a fellow as in theft and filching had no peere” (11: 359-63, qtd. in Bate 228). Shakespeare’s Autolycus not only embodies the attributes of both twins, as restless wanderer he also connects with another famous literary figure we have encountered as romantic role-model before: Autolycus was Odysseus’ maternal grandfather (cf. Orgel, *Winter’s* 50).

¹⁴⁴ Like *Pericles*, *The Winter’s Tale* has had problems with the acknowledgement of its ‘darker half’: although in the latter play the breach of sexual propriety proves to be a matter of Leontes’ imagination, dramatically it proved to be enough of an obstacle for two theatre producers in the 1750s, who consequently sought to ‘improve’ the play by simply excising its first three acts. Deprived of its wintry half, *The Winter’s Tale* became *The Sheep-Shearing; Or Florizel and Perdita* in Macnamara Morgan’s adaptation and David Garrick followed suit with his *Florizel and Perdita, a Dramatic Pastoral* (cf. Hunt, “Critical” 6).

goddess-like prank'd up" (4.4.10) and princes "Vilely bound up" (4.4.22), "pedlars ... have more in them than you'd think" (4.4.217) and shepherds turn out to be "gentlem[e]n born" (5.2.136). Art in its various (dis)guises is the requisite for the variety of indecorous but vital (in more than one sense of the word) metamorphoses that dominate the scene.¹⁴⁵ In this setting it is Perdita's "unusual weeds," the borrowed robes of queenliness, as Florizel cannot help but notice, that "to each part of you / Do give a life" (4.4.1-2).

Florizel's observation, when isolated from its context, can also be read as a tribute to the shape-shifting skills of the picaresque antihero of the pastoral jungle, "the rogue," as Forman notes in his *Booke of Plaies*, "that came in all tattered like Coll Pixie" (qtd. in Rowse 306-7). Forman's account and Shakespeare's characterisation conjure up another "Emperour of shifters" (Harvey 9): Robert Greene, author of some twenty-five prose titles, a deathbed confession and about six stage plays, is after all the real author-ity behind this play's narrative plot (cf. Newcomb "Green," n. pag.). Denigrated as "king of the paper stage," Robert Greene's reputation as profligate writer and "Connycatcher" was the subject of several pamphlets (some of them authored by himself) (Harvey 9, 4). The most vitriolic, published by rival author Gabriel Harvey shortly after Greene's death in 1592, reads like a character sketch for Shakespeare's ballad-seller:

... who in London hath not heard of his dissolute, and licentious liuing; his fonde disguisinge of a Master of Arte with ruffianly haire, vnseemely apparell, and more vnseemelye Company: ... his piperly Extemporizing, and Tarletonizing; his apische counterfeiting of euery ridiculous, and absurd toy: his fine coosening of Iuglers, and finer iugling with cooseners: ... his continuall shifting of lodgings: ... his impudent pamphletting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling, when other coosening shiftes failed.... (Harvey 9-10)

Instead of returning to the scene's major occupation – the redeeming love-plot between Florizel and Perdita which has been the focus of extensive critical attention – I would like to follow up the siren call of the 'Coll Pixie,' the "mischievous supernatural being," as Mowat explains, "that lured people astray into pixie paths and bogs" ("Rogues" 70). Given the mercurial nature of this subject, another critically 'distracting' journey is called for, one that will be mapped across the social and theatrical physique of the actor in order to coax, or rather 'cozen' into language the restless body of Autolycus: ex-courtier, rustic wanderer, thief, peddler, trickster, author, player, or what you will.

¹⁴⁵ As L. G. Salinger observes in his brief survey on the social setting of Shakespeare's plays, such seasonal festivities provided an important outlet for "local sentiment in voicing a grievance or ridiculing a bad neighbour," but were from the 1570s onwards increasingly threatened by the Puritan campaign against 'idle' and 'diabolical' pastimes (34).

3.4.1 Shifting Liveries

... beeing not sutable, hee proues a *Motley*: his mind obseruing the same fashion of his body: both consist of parcells and remnants ... (Stephens, *Essayes* 295-96)

Without responsibility, without fixed habitation and on the whole guilty of an ‘incontinent’ life, the figure of Autolycus not only bodies forth the variety of invectives levelled against the best-selling author of this play’s principle source, it also taps into commonplace allegations made against actors and wandering players at the time (cf. Bradbrook 47). Classed as mere vagabonds or servants at best, actors were not only accused of taking considerable liberties with the time and earnings of hard-working people, they were above all attacked for “*shifting liveries*,” for engaging in sumptuary transgressions inside as well as outside the theatre (Stallybrass, “Worn” 293, emphasis in original).¹⁴⁶ Here is how “A common Player” is characterised in a collection of *Essays and Characters Ironically, and Instructive* by John Stephens in 1615:

The Statute hath done wisely to acknowledge him a Rogue errant: for his chiefe essence is, *A daily Counterfeit*: He hath beene familiar so long with out-sides, that he professes himselfe (being vnknowne) to be an apparent Gentleman. But his thinne Felt, and his silke Stockings, or his foule Linnen, and faire Doublet, doe (in him) bodily reueal the Broker: So beeing not sutable, hee proues a *Motley*: his mind obseruing the same fashion of his body: both consist of parcells and remnants: but his minde hath commonly the newer fashion, and the newer stuffe: hee would not else hearken so passionately after new Tunes, new Trickes, new Devises: These together apparrell his braine and vnderstanding, whilst he takes the materialls vpon trust, and is himself the Taylor to take measure of his soules liking. (295-96)

This description reads as if it was tailor-made to fit Autolycus who, having been “whipped out of the court” (4.3.88-89), appears roaming the countryside in the rags that convey his tattered social status. As Autolycus himself puts it: “having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue” (4.3.95-96). It is an ‘occupation’ which, as the above quotation illustrates, could signify things as diverse as thieving or cheating, wandering and play-acting. The ‘parcels and remnants’ of his dexterous mind seem to find their material expression in the “many parcels of charge” (4.4.258-59) he carries about him; the motley of his pedlar’s pack, the variety of apparel, songs and ballads that cater to “man or woman, of all sizes” (4.4.193) and enable him to juggle various physical bodies and voices almost simultaneously.

What I am trying to suggest is that the destructive fantasy of the mutable body that featured so prominently in Leontes’ dystopia is here re-staged and re-evaluated in a carnivalesque

¹⁴⁶ Shakespeare’s upwardly mobile career from player to gentleman – the motto of the coat of arms bought for his father fittingly translating as ‘Not without right’ (*Non sans droit*) – being a case in point.

framework of (dis)guise: the ‘transvestism’ of Autolycus’ shifting habits literally puts the naturalising ideology of social difference in a state of undress. In a truly Bakhtinian manner, the mere removal of his “peddler’s excrement” (4.4.708) – Autolycus’ false beard – suffices to transform peddler into courtier, the grotesque body into a classical body, and vice versa.¹⁴⁷ Clothes, “the most regulated symbols” of sexual and social difference in the early modern age, are unceremoniously treated as “malleable props,” a theme that will be explored in greater depth in *Cymbeline* (Kastan and Stallybrass 9). The ‘shifting habits’ of players certainly touched a raw nerve: the disintegration of the social fabric was the subject of numerous polemical tracts against the stage. In his anti-theatrical treatise *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), Stephen Gosson emphatically reminds his readers that

... in Stage Playes for a boy to put one the attyre, the gesture, the passions of a woman; for a meane person to take vpon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signs to shewe them selues other wise then they are, and so with in the compasse of a lye.... (sig. E5r)

In accordance with this sentiment, Perdita repeatedly expresses an uneasiness about being ‘prank’d up’ in the “borrowed flaunts” (4.4.23) of a queen, a guise which compels her to ‘act’ out of, or rather, in character: “Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine / Does change my disposition” (4.4.133-35). Like most of the key players in this play, Perdita comes to realise that she is ‘not her own’. Through her participation in the carnivalesque spectacle she is both actor and spectator in a game where the allocation of (social) roles lies beyond her control: “I see the play so lies / That I must bear a part” (4.4.655-56).

That the referentiality at play in the early modern theatre (and beyond) is shifting and protean does not mean, however, that it is intractable. As a way of placing costume and body, deconstructive meaning and theatrical presence in a more tangible alignment, I want to look beyond Autolycus’ ‘character’ – a word that Shakespeare’s contemporaries would have associated “with the formation of letters in writing or printing” (Thomson, “Rogues” 321) – to investigate what Janette Dillon has referred to as the “authenticity-factor” behind the printed text (75). In other words, I want to flesh the action body of the text with an acting body, or, to

¹⁴⁷ Building on the insights about changes in bodily demeanour that Norbert Elias delineates in *The Civilising Process*, Anna Bryson argues that in the language of social hierarchy which began to emerge during the sixteenth century, bodily functions were “cast off and pushed onto the ‘carnivalesque’ body of the ‘common people’” (151). On the ways in which care and control of the body was held to reflect and enhance the status of the gentleman in early modern England see her “Rhetoric of Status: Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion, 1990) 136-53.

be more precise, to re-introduce into the text the bodily author of the original performance. As I will demonstrate, it is the actor's theatrical suit (in more than one sense) that texturises (and textualises) the peculiar heterogeneity of Autolycus' part. The trajectory of such a reading takes me across the threshold of the stage into the pixie paths and bogs of a performance-oriented criticism that privileges (collaborative) bodily over (singular) textual authorship.¹⁴⁸ This performative change of tack is particularly suited for an appreciation of the (fundamentally corporeal) collaborative energy that sustained the relatively modern institutional body of the early modern theatre, where the improvising art of the player had not yet been fully restrained by the author function with its claim for "discursive sovereignty over the 'matter' or text of the theatrical event" (Bristol, *Carnival* 119). Expanding on David Wiles's argument that specific lines in Shakespeare's plays were written to be spoken by specific individuals, I want to show that Autolycus' part (to return once more to one of the play's most persistent tropes) is tailor-made (cf. xi): it could not have been written without the bodily presence of Robert Armin as principal comedian and sharer in Shakespeare's company. It is in this roundabout, almost roguish manner that a concern with Stephens's "Taylor" on the one hand and Autolycus' tattered rags on the other resolve in a fool's motley.¹⁴⁹

Born around 1568 in Norfolk as the son of John Armin, tailor, Robert Armin started his eventful career as apprentice to the London company of Goldsmiths in 1581. At some point within the next six years, though, he must have become the protégé of Richard Tarlton, the first of the famous Elizabethan clowns, who famously predicted that Armin would "enjoy my clowns sute after me" (qtd. in Chambers, *Elizabethan* 299). Before Armin eventually joined Shakespeare's troop around 1599 to replace William Kemp (who had famously jiggged his way out of the Globe), he had toured the provinces as a member of Lord Chandos' company and made his name as a writer of satirical pamphlets and ballads. These few morsels of information already indicate the degree to which the roles or assumed aliases of Autolycus also refract Armin's personal and professional history, the chequered biography of a comedian famous for his ability to project multiple identities (cf. Wiles 139). But there is more 'intertexturising' to unravel. The intellectual sophistication of Armin's foolery and his renowned talent as a singer,

¹⁴⁸ See Janette Dillon's essay "Is There a Performance in this Text?" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 74-86, for an astute critical analysis of the current 'diplomatic' alliance between academic scholarship and theatre studies and the performance-driven search for 'authenticity' in editorial practice.

¹⁴⁹ I will use the term 'clown' in a technical-theatrical sense to refer to the professional performer who played the leading comic part in a theatre company. If written in capital letters, the designation 'Clown' refers to the rustic character in *The Winter's Tale*. The term 'fool' on the other hand will be used to refer to the distinctive comic persona that Armin developed. For a distinction between 'clown' and 'fool' in a theatre-related context see also David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), esp. 68-69. Most of my information on Armin and the status of the clown in the early modern theatre has been drawn from this cogent study.

skills which were invariably incorporated into the texts of the plays in which he took part, set him apart from the older stereotype of the boorish country clown whom he was often paired against. Armin's most prominent trademark, however, was his eccentric physique. Dwarfish of stature, Armin's clowning usually exploited the discrepancy between the grotesqueness of his anatomy and his verbal dexterity that allowed him to perform parodic impersonations of men physically and socially his superior.¹⁵⁰ In *The Winter's Tale* Autolycus' diminutive size repeatedly becomes the subject of a joke (see, for example, 4.3.103 and 5.2.170). When Autolycus finally gets to wear Florizel's princely garments even the Old Shepherd, ready to be fooled by this 'fantastical' would-be courtier's eloquence, cannot help but notice that something is amiss: "the garments are rich, but he wears them not handsomely" (5.2.750-51). The key to the humour is visual: Armin's bodily presence, the self-validating presence of a 'natural' fool, contends with the representative illusion of his role(s), allowing the audience to perceive the actor as a *persona* (dis)continuous with his scripted character. Verbally, this schism between personator and impersonated is replicated whenever Autolycus/Armin engages in the kind of double-speak that sets him apart, not simply as a character, but also as a stage figure whose composite theatrical identity provokes an awareness of difference playfully staged. When asked by Mopsa whether he can sing, Autolycus' reply "I can bear my part; you must know 'tis my occupation" (4.4.296) makes it impossible to determine who is speaking: Autolycus the rogue, Autolycus the pedlar and ballad-maker, Armin in his *persona* as stage clown, Armin as accomplished musician, or all of them at once.

As a dramatic hybrid that ventures beyond the bounds of mimetic illusion, the figure of Autolycus thus explicitly claims relation with the unruly body of his literary predecessor, the dissolute author of the play's plot, as well as that of his theatrical alter ego, the extemporising clown of the Elizabethan stage. Measured by his capacity to disrupt the proceedings of the plot through improvisatory performance, the clown invariably asserted the authority of his bodily presence over the demands of the text, spontaneously breaking into a jig, a song, or engaging in a contest of wits with the audience. As a form of creativity that effected "a situation of maximum intellectual and affective openness, but minimum accountability," such clowning came under increasing attack with the rising power of Puritanism towards the end of the sixteenth century (Bristol, *Carnival* 117). It seems only apt that the demise of a theatrical culture in which "playing," as Bristol puts it, "has relatively little to do with a fixed text and more with the contingency that marks popular festive customs" is recorded in what had come to be regarded as one of the greatest works of dramatic *literature* (*Carnival* 116). Written and

¹⁵⁰ In this context it is also interesting to note that the word fool, as Lesley Wade Soule has pointed out, is etymologically connected to the physical grotesque: it derives from the Old French "fol," meaning a bag or swollen belly (102).

performed at the turn of the century, *Hamlet*, a play frequently quarried for clues to Elizabethan theories on acting, seems to favour a more sophisticated mode of action where, to slightly modify Hamlet's phrase, 'discretion' is the tutor (cf. 3.2.15-16). Once again, temperance and moderation, those socially nuanced watchwords, put in an appearance: this time, the body that needs to be 'winnowed of excess' is the potentially improper body of the performer who will not "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" (*Ham.* 3.2.16-17). Rather than "tear[ing] a passion to tatters, to very rags" through histrionic gesturing, Hamlet advises the visiting players to "o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end... was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature" (3.2.9, 17-20). The actor's task is to discipline his body in line with a mimetic imperative, "his whole function suiting," as Hamlet puts it, "With forms to his conceit" (2.2.533-34) – the textual entity or character he is to represent. In "An Excellent Actor," a short characterisation written in retort to Stephens's "Common Player," which was added to Thomas Overbury's 1615 collection of popular character sketches, the professional actor is similarly commended as someone who (in contrast to the common entertainer) requires no crude theatrical (speak: artificial) 'prostheses' to unfold his artistic skill:¹⁵¹ "He doth not striue to make nature monstrous, she is often seen in the same Scaene with him, but neither on Stilts nor Crutches ... for what wee see him personate, we thinke truely done before vs" (Overbury sig. M5v-M6r). As Lise-Lone Marker observes in her article on "Nature and Decorum in the Theory of Elizabethan Acting," it is important to remember that 'truth to life' did not imply "behaviouristic 'naturalness'" but "the conscious artistry with which the seasoned actor interpreted and individualized the objective absolutes of ideal nature" (100, 94). According to Heywood it is the "smooth & formal moti^o" that commends the professional performer who knows how to master his body, how to "keepe a decorum in his countenance, neither to frowne when he should smile, nor to make unseemly and disguised faces in the delivery of his words" (sig. C3v, sig. C4r). Nature, in other words, is brought to life by the formalism of an art that observes aesthetic bounds of decorum and due proportion, not by the "distracting accidentals, disfiguring blemishes, indecorous declamation, or unsuitable gestures" generated by extempore clowning (Marker 100).

Hamlet's illusionistic theatre, a theatre reinvented in conformity with humanist models of literature and pedagogy, has no room for an actor who does not stick to such a text (cf. Bristol, *Carnival* 118-119). Accordingly, the extra-dramatic competence of the comic improviser proves to be an especially spiky thorn in Hamlet's 'too too solid flesh':

¹⁵¹ Even though this character description has by general critical consensus been attributed to the playwright John Webster, it will here be listed under the title of the collection (*New and Choise Characters*) and name of the author, Thomas Overbury, under which it was published.

... let those that play
your clowns speak no more than is set down for them,
for there be of them that will themselves laugh to set
on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too,
though in the mean time some necessary question of
the play be then to be considered; that's villainous,
and shows a most pitiful ambition on the fool that uses
it. (*Ham.* 3.2.34-40)

Hamlet's textually-oriented dicta effectively "disown the performer's body as a site of self-fashioned laughter, spectacle, and entertainment" (Weimann, "Literature" 355). Increasingly curtailed of his improvisatory range and license, the extemporising clown had virtually become extinct by the time Shakespeare wrote his late plays. When Autolycus, newly fashioned with Florizel's courtly apparel, expresses his conviction that "the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do anything extempore" (4.4.672-73), such optimism is as short-lived in the world of the play as it was to be in the course of theatrical history. At the dawn of the Jacobean era, as Lesley Wade Soule explains, the development of "new neoclassical concerns with verisimilitude and character 'personation' ... significantly coincided with the encouragement by political and religious authorities of textuality and narrative illusion as means of keeping theatrical performance (and its political consequences) under closer control" (16). The dissemination of authority in the popular theatre is contained by the introduction of an author as individual centre of production. As Bristol has argued, both the late sixteenth-century polemic against the stage and the early seventeenth-century humanist defences (foremost amongst them Ben Jonson) respond to the same basic anxiety: the dispersed authority of 'playing' not only in the playhouses but also in popular culture at large (cf. *Carnival* 113).¹⁵² Assuming sole responsibility for his aesthetic creation, the professional playwright guarantees and thus legitimises a more proper and controlled form of theatre in which the actor merely represents an author(itative) text. Thomas Hobbes specifies this distribution of theatrical authority in his *Leviathan* (1651):

Of Persons Artificiall, some have their words and actions *Owned* by those whom they represent. And then the Person is the *Actor*; and he that owneth his words and actions, is the *Author*: In which case the Actor acteth by Authority. (112, emphasis in the original)

Even though the irreverently anti-mimetic clown eventually had to adopt the more restrictively illusionist styles of performance, in his new guise he nevertheless remains, to appropriate

¹⁵² In this context it is also interesting to note that the figure of the author emerges at a time when, as I pointed out previously, James I authored himself as the voice of true law – "as both the author and giuer of strength thereto" – a law that was not subject to interpretative interference (*Trew* 75).

Autolycus' expression, 'constant to his profession' (cf. 4.4.682-83) whenever he strays from the author(ed) text to raise a range of cultural and political issues from the margins of the stage.

The purpose of this endoscopic foray into the entrails of early modern theatrical practice is not so much to rescue something essentially 'authentic' out of the encounter with a disembodied text but to show how the carefully orchestrated display of the performative body continues the play's preoccupation with a mode of theatrical engagement antithetical to the demands of dramatic illusion. Frustrating the linear, the narrative, the univocal, the slippage between character and actor that distinguishes Autolycus' part joins forces, so to speak, with the other 'quaint' theatrical devices that Shakespeare reactivates in his late plays. Testifying to the radical alterity that is incorporated within any closed structure, they serve as a reminder that the referential quest for that "within which passeth show" is always haunted by its very own "trappings and suits" (*Hamlet* 1.2.85, 86). In this play the clown's motley displaces the 'fabric' of Leontes' tragic 'folly' (cf. 1.2.429), a circumstance that serves as a forceful reminder that the transformative potency and potentiality of the theatrical refuses to be contained by the abortive fantasy of textual (and sexual) absolutism.

As a "liminoid" presence, Autolycus is the *maître de jeu* of a pastoral world that momentarily abandons textualised figurations of 'truth' and 'meaning' for an affirmative and regenerative play with difference.¹⁵³ This parodistic playing with mimesis and illusion, personation and live(li)ness takes place in what cultural anthropologist Victor Turner calls a liminal or liminoid space, a "temporal interface whose properties partially invert those of the already consolidated order which constitutes any specific cultural 'cosmos'" (41). The pastoral interlude, in other words, functions as a curtain-raiser for the climactic scene of artful issue to which the play has been building. As Autolycus speculates at the end of the fourth act, "there may be matter in it" yet (4.4.843): it is the theatrical spectacle of the final scene that eventually presents us with the very "stuff ... dreams are made on" (*The Tempest* 4.1.156-57).

3.5 Begetting Wonder

... prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say 'tis well.
(*WT* 5.3.18-20)

¹⁵³ The term "liminoid" is derived from Victor Turner's seminal anthropological work *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982). Put in most general terms, liminality here refers to the state of being 'in between' that is common to artists, actors and shamans. Analysing the 'theatrical' potential of social life, Turner distinguishes between liminoid phenomena which are marked by play and entertainment and are pervaded by optionality (as in carnival and theatre) and the liminal which is a matter of deep seriousness, it is compulsory and characterised by obligation (as in the initiation rituals of tribal societies) (cf. 43).

The body that has been temporarily shaken out of its ‘proper’ form and propriety by the carnivalesque exuberance of the pastoral mode is eventually superseded by the display of a body more decorous and decorative – a body that, to use Polixenes’ words, is of “an art / Which does mend nature” (4.4.95), or, to put it more precisely, a body whose “art itself is nature” (4.4.97). In the remaining chapters, I will investigate the significance of this aesthetic return to the female body in the final act of the play.

When the play shifts location once more from the pastoral evergreen back to Leontes’ wintry wasteland in act five, any notion of such a wholesome incorporation is still very much an imaginary issue. Occupying centre-stage in a theatre of grief, Hermione’s body has been put, as it were, on a pedestal in Leontes’ mind: the illocutionary force of Paulina’s language holds in living memory “my queen’s full eyes,” “her lips,” “her sainted spirit” (5.1.53, 54, 57). The ghostly presences of tragedy which Paulina conjures, however, keep Leontes’ eyes riveted to the past, to the disembodied spirit of that “perfect woman, she you kill’d” (5.1.15), and make it impossible for him to focus on “future good” (5.1.32), to face the “fail of issue” (5.1.27) which, as the Lords of Sicily are at pains to point out, is of pressing concern to the well-being of the kingdom. Impervious to the validity of such political demands, Leontes’ self-appointed counselor reminds them of the oracular status quo: “King Leontes shall not have an heir, / Till his lost child be found” (5.1.39-40). This is something as unlikely (or, as Paulina’s use of the indicative mode anticipates) as certain to happen as the fact that “your queen’s again in breath” (5.1.84).

Right on cue, a servant enters to announce Perdita’s arrival. Once Hermione’s youthful *Doppelgänger* ‘affronts’ Leontes’ eyes (cf. 5.1.74), restorative animation is close at hand and, as in *Pericles*, incestuous desire is its inaugural gesture:¹⁵⁴ the flesh-and-blood materialisation of someone “As like Hermione as is her picture” (5.1.73) literally gives body to a fantasy of return that promises to release Leontes from the tragic impasse that has hitherto held him captive.¹⁵⁵ Once again the interfering presence of an authoritative female figure is necessary to straitjacket the hero’s re-awakened libidinal energies into a more redemptive course of action – into a recognition that ensures the re-installment of the proper bride. Thus, when Paulina warns Leontes that “Your eye hath too much youth in it” (5.1.224), he dutifully assures her that “I thought of her [Hermione] / Even as these looks I made” (5.1.226-27). For Mary Anderson,

¹⁵⁴ Shakespeare here radically departs from his source, Greene’s *Pandosto*, where the incestuous complication of the plot prevents a comic reconciliation and instead leads to a tragic denouement.

¹⁵⁵ Nevo’s observation that Hermione’s animation represents “an embodiment of return – the always unimaginable, the always imagined desire” equally applies to Perdita’s miraculous recovery (“Delusions” 127). The difference, of course, lies in the legitimacy of the desire.

the first actress to double the role of Hermione and Perdita in what proved to be the longest-running production of the play in Britain and America in the nineteenth-century, these lines were to be taken as a literal casting call: “To entrust Perdita to a person unlike the queen in looks, voice or manner would ... give the lie to the king’s words” (qtd. in Bartholomeusz 120). The drawback of such doubling is that any presentation of an emotionally highly charged encounter between mother and daughter is usually adversely affected. In the 1887 production at the Lyceum in London, for example, Perdita was reduced to total silence (Anderson played the part of Hermione while the actress who stood in for Perdita was necessarily mute). Trevor Nunn’s attempt at a last-minute substitution in his 1969 production for the RSC seems to have proved mainly technically distracting (cf. Bartholomeusz 121-22). According to actress Judi Dench it “left the audience wondering how on earth it had happened, instead of feeling the emotion of what was happening between the characters. I didn’t feel so much moved as breathless” (qtd. in Price 174).

That the final act plays not only with Leontes’ but also the audience’s desire for the return of the corpo-real becomes clear when we are denied the satisfaction of witnessing the recognition of Perdita’s parentage as well as the grand reunion of the two ‘brothers,’ all of which take place off-stage. This time, not even a dumb show is offered as compensatory prop for the imagination. Instead, we are offered a sample of what Gurr has aptly called “unorthodox drama” where “all the reunions and comedy pairings ... are merely reported by a gathering of irrelevant courtiers (“The Bear” 420). And yet, language is clearly shown to be at its corporeal limits in the dramatic rendering of the “notable passion of wonder” (5.2.15-16) that is generated by the moment of recognition, a “sight,” the enquiring Autolycus is informed, “which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of” (5.2.43-44). Telling becomes the only way of showing but even the virtuoso demonstration of narrative *energeia* that vividly evokes the “casting up of eyes, holding up of hands” (5.2.47-48) fails to reproduce the impact of the original performative event, an “encounter,” the Third Gentleman insists once again, “which lames report ... and undoes description” (5.2.57-59).

The value of narrative as a repository of knowledge and recorded experience is in this scene clearly undermined by the emphasis placed on the missing referent, the substantiation of the things not seen: “That which I shall report will bear no credit, / Were not the proof so nigh” (5.1.178-79). Similarly, self-reflexive references to ‘old tales’ whose claim to ‘verity is in strong suspicion’ (cf. 5.2.28-30) mock the artificiality and contrivance of romances where with “Every wink of an eye, some new grace will be born” (5.2.110-11). A play whose title establishes it at least in part as a member of that very same fictional medium forms no exception. On the contrary: the histrionics of the present verbal relation have effectively brought home to the

audience that in this play “such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour, that ballad-makers *cannot* be able to express it” (5.2.24-25, my emphasis). The metadramatic allusion is thus deliberate: it emphasises the shortcomings of romantic narratives with which ballad-makers such as Autolycus (or authors such as Greene) entertain their credulous audiences in order to throw into relief the more sophisticated dramatics of wonder theatre has to offer. As Enterline has argued, the desire for a truly performative language that has been haunting the play from its very inception will find its “culminating visual icon in the event of Hermione’s ‘animation,’” a visionary spectacle that was to be Shakespeare’s greatest *coup de théâtre* yet (“You” 40). The transformative power of such ‘co-active’ dramaturgy is prefigured in the court’s collective participation in yet another off-stage re(ve)lation, Perdita’s reaction to hearing the news about her mother’s death: “Who was most marble, there changed colour; / some swooned, all sorrowed: if all the world could / have seen’t, the woe had been universal” (5.2.89-91).

Marble and marvel in this play are inherently related.¹⁵⁶ When Paulina finally draws back the curtain to reveal Hermione’s statue, the play returns full circle to the site of its original epistemological crisis: the opaque sign of the female body. It is to be a return with a difference, however. Within the artistic/sacred setting – the sculpture is displayed in a chapel connected to Paulina’s art gallery – the very opacity of Hermione’s body is reinterpreted as wholesome matter. Like Bakhtin’s classical body, “closed off, finished, a body all surface and no interior,” Hermione’s imago, to use Paster’s words, “instantiates the bodily ideal of Renaissance absolutism” (*Body* 15). ‘Marble constant,’ Hermione returns to the play aesthetically re-enclosed – an emblem of female ‘integrity’. The statue scene thus functions as a visual (and generic) corrective to the trial scene which it recalls both through its structural position in the play as well as through its dramaturgy. In Doran’s 1998/99 RSC production, for example, this ‘reiteration with a difference’ was emphasised through a similar use of blocking and props for both scenes. Thus, as the reviewer from *The Spectator* notices, “the same trellised dock in which the queen had been so viciously humiliated, [was] now transformed into a sacred shrine aglow with candles” (qtd. in Tatspaugh 204).

As I will try to show in the last chapter on this play, it is under Paulina’s artistic direction that the queen’s body becomes the focal point not of public humiliation but of public

¹⁵⁶ The movement from metaphor to metamorphosis is anticipated in the linguistic slippage between marble and marvel, stone and astonishment, a conceit that is re-invoked when Paulina ‘awakes’ the statue: “be stone no more; approach; / Strike all that look upon with marvel” (5.3.99-100). Hermione’s stony immobility is thus metaphorically transferred onto the petrified audience. On the idea of immobilising emotion see Abbe Blum’s “‘Strike all that look upon with mar[b]le’: Monumentalizing Women in Shakespeare’s Plays,” in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990) 99-118.

veneration, a recognition that effects (and affects) yet another restorative ending. Together with the witnessing spectators (on and off the stage), Leontes is asked to “Behold, and say ‘tis well” (5.3.20). Paulina’s specular imperative leaves no room for doubt: this body has nothing to hide. As such, Hermione’s iconic embodiment – an artistic creation that Frederick Kiefer aptly refers to as Paulina’s “*pièce de résistance*” (157) – commemorates a truth that runs counter not only to the hermeneutics of suspicion virulent in the tragic half of the play, but also to what various critics have identified as a topical “cultural investment in a dissective epistemology” (Marchitello 21) in which “the opening of the human body was considered a central act in the obtainment of knowledge” (Hillman, “Visceral” 83).¹⁵⁷

3.5.1 Bodies of Knowledge

Now I am ready to tell how bodies are changed
 Into different bodies.
 (Hughes 3)

To recapitulate briefly: in the first three acts, Leontes’ failure to believe in Hermione’s integrity inaugurates a crisis about her knowability that eventually negates her status as wife and the legitimacy of her ‘issue’. His jealous suspicion is fuelled by what cannot be seen and thus cannot be known: the content of his wife’s pregnant body. The generative physiology of Hermione’s body is thus re-viewed through the refracting prism of an anatomical or (what here amounts to the same thing) penetrative gaze bent on turning the object of inquiry inside out.¹⁵⁸ The meaning of the hidden inside, however, far from being unknown, has already been culturally and ideologically inscribed: the body that Leontes’ surveilling gaze encounters is legible only within a standardised discourse of gender that, as Peter Stallybrass and others have argued, constructs the female body as “naturally grotesque” (“Patriarchal” 126). In an attempt to bridge “the gap ... between what is seen and what can be known about women,” Leontes, as I tried to show, increasingly supplements, and finally even supplants specular observation with speculative proof (McLuskie 154).¹⁵⁹ Words supplant flesh when Hermione’s “without-

¹⁵⁷ For a seminal study on the early modern culture as a ‘culture of dissection’ see Jonathan Sawday’s *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁵⁸ In his essay on “Visceral Knowledge: Shakespeare, Skepticism, and the Interior of the Early Modern Body,” David Hillman suggests that the practice of anatomy could be viewed as “an extremely concrete embodiment of ... a central drive of skepticism” – an epistemological certitude that is predicated on “the absolute knowledge of the body’s interior” (84).

¹⁵⁹ Analysing the ways in which Renaissance anatomies are “inexorably discursive and removed from an unmediated observation of ‘natural fact’” (24), Howard Marchitello shows how anatomy, “the ‘graphic-spatial’ science of ocular proof,” especially where the female body is concerned, “collapses into

door form” (2.1.69) is subjected to a rhetorical anatomisation that uncovers the pre-determined meaning of her body’s procreant interiority. Since the epistemological certitude of Hermione’s ‘guilt’ “lack’d sight only” (2.1.177), it is rendered visible in the punitive spectacle of the ‘open trial’.¹⁶⁰ In a proceeding reminiscent of the dissective demonstrations conducted in early modern anatomical theatres, the judicial inquiry subjects the queen to a discursive explication that marks as radically open and public the very body whose ‘privacy’ is at stake. It is an anatomical obsession with the female sexual interior, which is also rendered visible (in a very literal sense) on the cover of Andreas Vesalius’ *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543): the focal point of the illustration that portrays the interior of an anatomical theatre is the opened womb of a woman.

As tale-telling signifier, Hermione’s body is no longer corpo-real – Leontes’ life-denying gaze literally renders it inanimate: “go and see: if you can bring / Tincture, or lustre in her lip, her eye, / Heat outwardly or breath within” (3.2.204-06). The scene’s investment not only in the spectacular but in the specular serves to remind us that visual knowledge is what has been at stake in this play. It suggests why Leontes’ recognition of his wife can only be effected through this statuesque detour. Hermione’s ‘depetrification’ depends on the exorcism of the voyeuristic relation that has rendered her inanimate. In the following I will show how Paulina redeems Leontes’ tragic error and myopic vision through a re-staging of Hermione’s body; it is a re-staging which adjusts the Sicilian theatre of grief to a new generic decorum that, contrary to appearances, favours marvel over marble.

When he first sets his eyes on the artful replica of his wife, Leontes experiences an affective perturbation he had not bargained for: the sight of its liveliness, he finds, is “piercing to my soul” (5.3.34). Its very wrinkles seem to commemorate his own tragic flaw, having “My evils conjur’d to remembrance” (5.3.40). In dramaturgical terms, Leontes is experiencing the effects, or rather, affects evoked by what Guarini calls a “simulacrum of terror,” an aesthetically modulated “likeness of the terrible” (qtd. in Henke 126). A dramatic device of potential tragic significance, its function is to incite, through fictional distance, an experience of diminished tragic intensity. The benefit of this for the intended audience/spectators is obvious: they are able to arrive at redemptive insights without having to experience the emotionally and physically disturbing side effects of a full blown tragic catharsis. Flaunting the accretion of

solipsistic self-reflexivity: it realizes its own truth and certainty not in actual bodies, but within its own fabric, body, text” (36).

¹⁶⁰ In his analysis of the representation of the anatomised human body in the Renaissance, Sawday makes a similar point when he suggests that the ‘scientific’ dissections that took place in anatomical theatres were inevitably implicated in a “theatre of investigation and punishment” that served to re-assert “the rights of sovereign power over the body of the condemned criminal” (“Fate” 117, 116). Accordingly, the “ultimate punishment for the transgressor against either divine or human law is to be made spectacle under the flaying knife of authority” (“Fate” 116).

artifice that has gone into its making, Paulina allows Leontes to re-view the object of his tragic ‘issue’ – the “perfect woman, she you kill’d” (5.1.15) – as a tragicomic fiction, a body prop that is used to recalibrate his feelings “twixt joy and sorrow” (5.2.73). That such controlled unsettling of ‘sense’ is beneficial to Leontes’ moral outlook becomes apparent when he begins to connect his own emotional imperviousness earlier in the play with the present immobility of Hermione’s image: “I am asham’d: does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?” (5.3.38). Temperance here is clearly not understood in a Stoic sense: unmoved, Leontes realises, Hermione can only ever die to him again. He needs to recognize the inadequacy of such “dead likeness” (5.3.15), of a life-denying gaze that “presupposes containment as the condition of the female body,” in order to see the living woman underneath the veneer of paint (Newcomb, “If” 245).

3.5.2 *Simulatum Corpus*, or: Why Shakespeare’s Bodies Go Ovid

... the business of metamorphosis ... is to make flesh of metaphors....
(Barkan, *Gods* 23)

To move her audience from metaphor to metamorphosis, from stone to astonishment, Paulina’s specular dramaturgy takes recourse to a concept of the body found outside the anatomising parameters of knowledge established by Cartesian philosophy and modern science.¹⁶¹ In the statue scene, erotic myth creeps in through the back-door of art criticism, giving body to a fantasy of return that promises release, in a generic sense, from a too literal-minded, melancholic bondage to tragic idea(l)s. A dedicated “passion-mover,” Paulina knows which buttons to push, or rather, which fictive models to evoke, to transform sadness into pleasure (T. Wright 183).¹⁶² In short: she clearly knows her Ovid. As a myth where marble and marvel are inherently related, Ovid’s tale of Pygmalion seems an obvious choice, even though, to early modern Puritan minds at least, a slightly ‘wanton’ one. After all, the licentiousness of a tale in which the reward for sensual indulgence is animating sex with a statue seems a far cry from the moral edification Guarini had in mind. That this is also not the type of sensual

¹⁶¹ And yet, even here the opposition between the ‘artistic’ and the ‘scientific’ discourses of corporeality are not as clear-cut as one would think: it is perhaps no coincidence that the inspiration for the early modern anatomical images of the ‘living corpses’ was, as Jonathan Sawday points out, at least in part derived “from scattered fragments of antique statuary” (“Fate” 127).

¹⁶² Wright’s term for the orator of “great prudence, and a sound iudgement” that undertakes to persuade his audience to reason through a movement of passion (184).

arousal foremost on Paulina's restorative agenda is suggested by the number of changes she introduces in her dramatic re-staging of the myth of the 'living statue'.

To recall briefly: the story of Pygmalion and his ivory statue can be traced back to Philostephanus' *Cypriaca*, a collection of foundation legends of the cities and regions of the Greek world written around the second century BC which is no longer extant (cf. Miller 205). The gist of the legend, however, is preserved in the accounts of two early Christian apologists, Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius. In these accounts, the story of Pygmalion is an obscene myth about a Cypriot king who falls in love – and eventually has sexual relations with – an ivory statue representing the goddess of love, Aphrodite. Medieval and early modern interpretations of the myth were usually more familiar with Ovid's version, included in Book 10 of his *Metamorphoses* (c. AD 1-8), which revises its source material to focus on the issues of metamorphosis and art, transforming what is essentially a tale about unnatural desire into a complex statement about artistic creation and the life-affirming power of love (cf. Barkan, *Gods*, 303n52). In marked contrast to the dominant thematic concern with violated bodies and bodily dismemberment that characterises the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, the Pygmalion tale is concerned with the affects and effects of 'becoming body,' something, the poem implies, that is inherently connected to becoming human(e).

Shakespeare's invocation of Ovid clearly merits further investigation, especially since, as Goran Stanivukovic has argued in his study on *Ovid and the Renaissance Body* (2001), the early modern revival of Ovidian narratives coincided roughly with the discovery of a 'new science' of human anatomy which revolutionised the ways of understanding and looking at the body. With their mutability, their paganism, and their overt eroticism, Ovidian bodies seemed to offer Renaissance writers alternative discourses of corporeality, discourses as Stanivukovic suggests, that treated "the body both as malleable matter and as metonymy of erotic identification" in ways that were not restrained by normative ideologies of gender and sexuality (8). In the metamorphic interlude that follows, I want to ask several related questions: precisely how – and with what formal and corporeal effects for his writing – does Shakespeare read Ovid? What does such reading suggest about the relationship between body and (restorative) knowledge in *The Winter's Tale*? In order to fully understand the ways in which Shakespeare redeploys Ovidian ideologies of embodiment and desire for his own romantic purposes, it is necessary to recall the extent to which not only Shakespeare's poetic *corpus* as such, but also the literary culture of his time is marked by a fascination with what Arthur Golding, Ovid's most

popular early modern translator, refers to as the “dark Philosophie of turned shapes” (*Ovid’s* 405, Epistle 7).¹⁶³

Invariably, in studies that venture to speculate on the matter of Shakespeare’s reading, Ovid is singled out as the playwright’s favourite author.¹⁶⁴ Much has also been made of the fact that the Bodleian library holds a copy of the 1502 edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* which seems to have been inscribed and signed by a certain ‘W^m. Sh^c.’ Less sensationally appealing but academically more persuasive evidence about Shakespeare’s detailed knowledge of Ovid can be found in the texts themselves: there is hardly any play in which Ovid’s influence cannot be traced. Among the infinite variety of the literary intertexts that animate Shakespeare’s works, a copy of the *Metamorphoses* even has the unique distinction of being brought onto stage and named in one of his first plays, only to be picked up again in one of the last plays of his career.¹⁶⁵ That the playwright who, according to Ben Jonson, had “small Latin, and less Greek” should spice up his works with allusions, adaptations, and direct quotations from Ovid is hardly surprising (qtd. in Barkan, “Living” 32): mythological allusion pervades virtually every piece of early modern writing. Next to Boccaccio’s *De Genealogica Deorum*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* constituted the richest storehouse of ancient mythology in early modern culture. In Shakespeare’s time, it was in fact almost impossible to bypass Ovid whose works were used as set texts on the grammar school curriculum. Moreover, in a culture shaped by humanist education, the imitation of classical texts was not only a common but also a valued practice in literary composition: the manner of imitation in fact defined the skill of the writer.¹⁶⁶

In this respect Shakespeare forms no exception. As Jonathan Bate demonstrates in his seminal study on *Shakespeare and Ovid* (1993), Shakespeare experimented with “a vast repertory of metamorphic Ovidian manoeuvres” throughout his career (270). As direct imitations or structural adaptations, his early works and comedies (*Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Titus Andronicus* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) are most obviously Ovidian. While Shakespeare rarely seems to allude to Ovid in his mature plays, there is a significant renaissance of Ovidianism when he experiments with a more mythic mode of composition in his last plays (cf. Bate 215). In order to understand the attraction Ovid’s works had for early modern writers like Shakespeare, it is helpful to briefly retrace the history of their reception.

¹⁶³ Quotations from Golding’s translation of Ovid follow John Frederic Nims’s edition of *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation of Ovid 1567* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry, 2000) unless specified otherwise.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Leonard Barkan, “What Did Shakespeare Read?” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 31-47.

¹⁶⁵ The reference is to *Titus Andronicus* (4.1.42) and *Cymbeline* (2.3.45). Both incidentally refer to the same tale, the rape and mutilation of Philomela, who, unable to speak, weaves her story into tapestry.

¹⁶⁶ For the humanist emphasis on the ethical value of classic texts see the first chapter in Jonathan Bate’s *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), esp. 1-47.

In accordance with the secularisation of literary texts in the Renaissance, “a millennium-long tradition of reading Ovid’s poems as if they were allegorical and as if their sentiments were morally elevated rather than erotically charged” went into decline in the sixteenth century (Bate 25). Allegorical translation of Ovid into biblical terms gradually became less prominent while the moral interpretation “gained new strength from the humanist emphasis on the moral wisdom of pagan culture” (Bate 26). Thus, Golding stresses the morality and civic worth of his translation in a prose dedication to his patron, the Earl of Leicester, in which he praises the *Metamorphoses* for “purporting outwardly moste pleasant tales & delectable histories, and fraughted inwardlye with most piththie [sic] instructions and wholesome examples” (*Fyrst* n. pag.). In his complete translation of 1567, Golding includes a verse epistle (also addressed to Leicester) in which he commences to reconcile Ovid with the Bible (medieval *allegoresis*) only to proceed with select moralising interpretations of Ovid’s tales which, as Golding points out, are to be read as “Instructions which import the prayse of vertues, and the shame / Of vices, with the due rewardes of eyther” (*Ovid’s* 407, Epistle 65-66). But Ovid’s ‘wanton’ matter, the mythological love-stories that inspired late-Elizabethan eroticism could not be contained so easily. Despite Golding’s efforts, later English translators such as George Tuberville and Christopher Marlowe read Ovid’s works for their amorous and linguistic wit as much as for their wisdom. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* Shakespeare has Holofernes (the schoolmaster) make the following memorable remark: “Ovidius Naso was the man; and why indeed ‘Naso,’ but / for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the / jerks of invention” (4.2.125-27).

By the 1590s Ovid had thus evolved to “a source of poetic and even licentious delight rather than moral edification” (Bate 32). As Colin Burrow observes, many English poets at the time seized the opportunity “to sound respectably learned even while they described undressing with their mistress” (304). Tales from the *Metamorphoses* became a popular poetical treasure trove that facilitated the creation of a new genre of short erotic narrative poems, the epyllion (cf. Burrow 304).¹⁶⁷ It seems that next to his stylistic inventiveness, desire and sexuality are the topics for which Ovid was equally admired and derided in the Renaissance. The *Metamorphoses* in particular develops polymorphisms of both narrative art and sexual desire that must have been as fascinating as they were disturbing. As Valerie Traub puts it, the “transgression of bodily, moral and epistemological boundaries” became the hallmark of

¹⁶⁷ An example for this is John Marston’s *Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image* (1598), a satire on contemporary amatory verse.

Ovidian eroticism (265). It is such blurring of confines that, as I have already indicated in my discussion of *Pericles*, also characterises the trajectory of Shakespeare’s romances.¹⁶⁸

In Book 10 of his *Metamorphoses* Ovid relates how Pygmalion, who is initially introduced as a simple craftsman, creates his ideal image of a woman out of ivory. The sculpture turns out to be a mimetic masterpiece, at once incredibly life-like and of an art that surpasses nature. Repulsed by the women nature has on offer (or rather, the failings ‘natural’ to women), Pygmalion instead falls in love with his own creation. As Ovid makes clear, it is the *simulatum corpus*, the semblance of a body that incites his amorous passion: “miratur et haurit / pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes” (27, 10.252-53).¹⁶⁹ Wishing for the statue to be real, Pygmalion begins to confuse life-likeness with life. Against reason, he treats his artefact as if it were alive, half-believing that his kisses are returned and that his fingers leave bruises on the sculpture’s ‘flesh’:

saepe manus operi temptantes admovet, an
sit / corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur
esse fatetur, / oscula dat reddique putat
loquiturque tenetque / sed credit tactis
digitos insidere membris / et metuit
pressos veniat ne livor in artus. /
et modo blanditias adhibet....
(*Ovid: Metamorphoses* X 27, 10. 254-59)

With many a touch he tries it – is it flesh
/ Or ivory? Not ivory still – he’s sure! /
Kisses he gives and thinks they are
returned; / He speaks to it, caresses it,
believes / The firm new flesh beneath his
fingers yields, / And fears the limbs may
darken with a bruise.
(trans. Melville 233, 10.254-59)¹⁷⁰

During a festival in honour of Venus, Pygmalion asks the goddess of love for a wife that resembles his ‘ivory maiden’ (“eburnea virgo...similas mea” [27, 10.275-276]), not daring to ask for the ‘real’ thing (in this case, the sculpture itself). Once again, as Bate points out, the “idea that the ‘living’ being would be but an image of the statue is characteristic of the story’s inversion of the normative relationship between life and art” (235). Venus understands Pygmalion’s desire and grants his secret wish, giving life to the statue itself. The actual animation, however, is specifically presented as a process that takes place between artist and sculpture. The statue’s aliveness, so to speak, seems to be effected by the manual labour of the artist rather than by divine intervention. The sexual overtones in the description simultaneously allude to and elude the act of intercourse. The passage climaxes with

¹⁶⁸ Note, for example, the Ovidian resonance of Pericles’ passionate exclamation at the climactic moment of reunion with his wife: “That on the touching of her lips I may / Melt and no more be seen” (5.3.42-43).

¹⁶⁹ The Latin text of Book 10 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* follows the edition by Lee Fratantuono (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), unless specified otherwise.

¹⁷⁰ The English translations of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* follow the Oxford World’s Classics Edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), translated by A.D. Melville and edited by E. J. Kenney, unless specified otherwise.

Pygmalion's realisation that what warms to his touch is a living body ("corpus erat" [28, 10.289]):

... temptatum mollescit ebur positoque
rigore / subsedit digitis ceditque, ut
Hymettia sole / cera remollescit
tractataque pollice multas / flectitur in
facies ipsoque fit utilis usu. / dum stupet
et dubie gaudet fallique veretur, / rursus
amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat.
/ corpus erat: saliant temptatae pollice
venae.

(Ovid: *Metamorphoses* X 28, 10.283-89)

... beneath his touch the flesh / Grew
soft, its ivory hardness vanishing, / And
yielded to his hands, as in the sun / Wax
of Hymettus softens and is shaped / By
practised fingers into many forms, / And
usefulness acquires by being used. / His
heart was torn with wonder and misgiving,
/ Delight and terror that it was not true! /
Again and again he tried his hopes – / She
was alive! The pulse beat in her veins!
(trans. Melville 233-34, 10.283-89)

The statue softens like melting wax, a simile that – as Enterline points out – “evokes a fantasy of a female receptive ‘part,’” an ‘impression’ sustained by the fact that the statue-turned-woman never gets to speak for herself (*Rhetoric* 147).¹⁷¹ One could argue, in fact, that Pygmalion's creation remains a reflective *simulacrum* in a speculative sense: like a mirror, all she (rather poignantly) is allowed to reflect in Ovid's handling of the myth is the image of her creator and the sky above him: “erubuit timidumque ad lumina lumen / attollens pariter cum caelo vidit amantem” (*Metamorphoses* 28, 10.293-94).¹⁷² Once the wax metaphor is reimbued with its topical meaning, the implicit reference to the (per)formative power of language becomes an explicit one: Ovid's *tabula rasa* is not the empty page but the writing tablet coated with wax, a material substance that literally and figuratively yields to the pressure of formative figural language. Unlike paper, however, Ovid's medium of writing is more flexible: characters written on wax need not be permanent; they can be erased or rewritten. The use of this trope, as Enterline elaborates, serves to illustrate that the interest in “‘forms’ (*formae*) and ‘figures’ (*figurae*)” that characterises the *Metamorphoses* as a whole is suffused with self-reflexive poetic, rhetorical, and corporeal resonances that designate physical and linguistic meanings at once (*Rhetoric* 7, cf. 64).¹⁷³ Wax in many ways, therefore, is potentially significant matter in Ovid's hands. For Leonard Barkan it even stands “as an emblem for all matter in this metamorphic

¹⁷¹ In Ovid the newly made woman remains nameless: the name Galatea for the sculpture is a relatively modern invention and seems to have appeared first in Rousseau's adaptation of the tale in 1770 (cf. Miller 281n24).

¹⁷² In Golding's 1967 translation this passage reads: “lifting fearefully / Hir eyelidds up, hir lover and the light at once did spye” (*Ovid's* 257, 10.319-20).

¹⁷³ In addition to *forma* and *figura*, Enterline mentions as examples: “*pes* (physical and metrical foot); *membrum* (part of the body and part of a speech or literary work); ... *signum* (an identifying mark and the impression or mark in a piece of wax); *simulacrum* (a body's outward appearance and statue or image); and *mouere* (to move physically and to move by means of words).” (*Rhetoric* 64).

poem, staying the same and ever changing,” something that suggests that the *Metamorphoses* is contrary to all “rigid plans of finding out and abiding truths” (*Gods* 77, 78).

Even though it is virtually impossible to do justice to the complexity of larger narrative strategies and self-reflexive fantasies that shape Ovid’s epic, Ovid’s engagement with such waxing (and vexing) issues is, in fact, worth pursuing precisely because such topical entanglements return with a vengeance in Renaissance re-visitations of Ovidian matter. They are particularly evident in the way in which Shakespeare in his late romances puts into play the semantics shared by biological and textual reproduction and of textual and sexual inscription (cf. De Grazia, “Imprints” 74). Wax, or Ovid’s conception of matter as potentiality to embody different forms, provides the missing link for a theoretical trajectory that aligns Ovid’s narratives of the body with Shakespeare’s performing corporealities, only to resurface in a different guise in Butler’s theory of performativity, in which reiterated performances of (gender) identity constitute, rather than imitate, acts that come to be accepted as reality.¹⁷⁴

The culminating thematic expression of *différance*, of reiteration with a difference, or, in Ovid’s words, of ‘bodies changed into new forms,’ is, interestingly enough, articulated by a philosophical persona famous for positing the transmigration of souls (*metempsychosis*). The Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras appears as up-front narrator in Book 15 to frame Ovid’s mythological *opus* with a long speech about the constant flux of things. In what is often taken to be Ovid’s central statement about poetic immortality, Pythagoras repeatedly claims that “nihil est toto, quod perstet, in orbe. / cuncta fluunt, omnisque vagans formatur imago” (*Metamorphoses* 363, 15.177-78).¹⁷⁵ The connection to Ovid’s concept of metamorphosis is obvious: it is no coincidence that Pythagoras’ chief metaphor for his theory of *metempsychosis* is that of the changes taking place to a piece of wax. This is how Golding (1567) translates the passage in question:

Al things doo change. But nothing sure dooth perrish.
...
And even as supple wax with ease receyveth fygures straunge,
And keepes not ay one shape, ne bydes assured ay from change,
And yit continueth always wax in substaunce, so, I say,
The soule is ay the selfsame thing it was, and yit astray
It fleeteth into sundry shapes. (*Metamorphoses* 382, 15.183-192)

¹⁷⁴ For Butler’s theory of gender performance see her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁷⁵ The quotation follows William S. Anderson’s Latin text edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Leipzig: BSB Teubner, 1985).

The emphasis on shifting shapes refers the reader back to the opening of the *Metamorphoses*, a poetic project that, as its introductory lines suggest, is to explain the origins of the world through the image of perpetual bodily change. Even though Pythagoras was known to believe in an absolute distinction between an imperishable, immaterial soul and its changing material forms, the metaphoric vehicle that Ovid's Pythagoras uses subverts this very opposition: as Enterline observes in a brilliant analysis of the passage, by comparing the soul to a pliant piece of wax the narrator "uses a simile that equates *anima* with precisely that from which it is said to be distinct: a material form" (*Rhetoric* 67). Just as the immortal fame of the narrator and his work is dependent on the "lips of men" (379, 15.877), the formative voices of future readers/singers, the soul is inevitably shaped by the very forms it wants to transcend. It is this deconstructive move that edges Ovid's poetics of metempsychosis closer to an Aristotelean conception of the relation between the body and soul, a conception, once again, that cannot do without wax, nor, for that matter, without statues either.

Comparing the relation of the soul to the body to that which the shape of a statue bears to its material basis, Aristotle contends:

... we should not ask whether soul and body are one, any more than whether the wax and the impression are one, or in general whether the matter of each thing and that of which it is the matter are one. For, while unity and being are so spoken of in many ways, that which is most properly so spoken of is the actuality (*De Anima* 2.1, 412b 6-9).

As function manifested in form, for Aristotle the body is actuality. It cannot be encountered meaningfully except under the aspect of its *informing* soul just as the soul cannot exist apart from the body, for the processes of living, sensing, and knowing require an organism that lives, senses, and knows. The soul, in other words, for Aristotle, is the body in action. With this formulation, a formulation that opportunely recalls not only the working title of this study, but also Judith Butler's concern with 'bodies that matter,' I will (for now) rest content with pointing out this theoretical genealogy and proceed with an analysis of the complex process of materialisation as dramatised by one of Ovid's more mellifluous re-animators: 'honey-mouthed' Shakespeare.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ The full reference, made by Francis Meres in his book of commonplaces entitled *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598), reads: "As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to live in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid liues in mellifluous and hony-tongued *Shakespeare*" (282).

3.5.3 The Shakespearean Re-Turn: Bringing Myth to Life

The statue “is” the play.
(Garber, *Shakespeare* 851)

To appreciate the extent of Shakespeare’s debt to Ovidian bodies in *The Winter’s Tale*, it is necessary to return to the margins, to the mythical context in which the Pygmalion story is embedded – the “dark contours” that Bate finds so irrelevant to Shakespeare’s handling of the myth (234). As I shall argue here, knowledge of the misogynistic and sexual undertow of the Cyprian stories in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* contributes to an understanding of the complexity with which Shakespeare represents bodies and their sexual relations in the romances. Thus, the metamorphosis that directly precedes the Pygmalion story – the Propoetides that are transformed into stone because of their shameless sexual behaviour (they are declared to be history’s first prostitutes) – provides an oblique commentary on the circumstances that have led to Hermione’s ‘petrification’ (cf. *Metamorphoses* 10.238-242).¹⁷⁷ Leontes’ misogynistic denouncement of women in the first half of the play (something that is echoed both by Pericles and Posthumous) resembles Pygmalion’s initial revulsion at the lewd behaviour of the Propoetides. It is this ready belief in woman’s ‘natural’ disposition towards promiscuity that forces both protagonists to retrieve their ideal woman from the realm of the imaginary. What their ‘affection’ essentially conceives is either what is, or – as in Hermione’s case – appears to be, a mute, impervious and immobile artefact, an image whose presence is predicated on the absence of the living body/woman.¹⁷⁸ It is surely no mere coincidence that in both Shakespeare’s and Ovid’s version of the myth, animation only takes place when there is female backup to the generative project: while Venus signals her support through flaming fires, Paulina initiates and monitors the entire ‘respiratory’ process in the statue scene.

As some further investigation into ‘marginal matters’ reveals, it seems that even though the myth of Pygmalion has come to represent the paradigmatic tale of (male) artistic creation in western culture, even in Ovid’s take on the myth the triumph of art over nature is not achieved without a cost. Thus, despite the fact that Ovid uses a typical fairy-tale formula to wrap up his celebratory fable, the story does go on to tell us that not all’s well that ends well.¹⁷⁹ It is – to

¹⁷⁷ In this context it is also interesting to note that the only explicit reference to the Pygmalion myth to be found in the entire Shakespeare canon directly relates the image of the statue to the theme of Propoetidian prostitution. Thus, in *Measure for Measure* Lucio asks the pimp Pompey: “What, is there none / of Pygmalion’s images newly to be made woman to be had / now, for putting the hand in the pocket and extracting it / clutched?” (3.2.43-46).

¹⁷⁸ On the relation between body and image, presence and absence see also Hans Belting, “Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology,” in *Critical Inquiry* 31.2 (2005): 302-19.

¹⁷⁹ The Pygmalion myth proper ends with the sentence: “The goddess graced the union she had made, / And when nine times the crescent moon had filled ... an infant girl was born, / Paphos, from whom the island takes its name” (10.295-97).

say the least – interesting to find that Pygmalion’s sexual union with a statue-turned-woman begets what Bate identifies as a “tragic line” (234): the incest motif that seems to play such a vital role in the conception of Shakespeare’s late romances plays a prominent role in the story about Pygmalion’s offspring, couples that did not live happily ever after. Focusing on Myrrha’s incestuous desire for her father, Cinyras (Pygmalion’s grandson), the poem relates at great length how the sexual consummation of Myrrha’s passion is eventually acted out with the help of a nurse in whom she confides. *Pericles* immediately springs to mind, especially Shakespeare’s innovative treatment of his primary source, Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, in the opening incest story.¹⁸⁰ Even though these ‘dark contours’ might conveniently have been forgotten in the history of its reception, early modern readers of the *Metamorphoses* would have been aware of their relevance. Thus, for Golding, “The tenth booke cheefly dooth containe one kynd of argument / Reproving most prodigious lusts of such as have bene bent / Too incest most unnaturall” (*Ovid’s* 411, Epistle 213-15). Even though its presence is perhaps less obvious, incest also has its place in the libidinal dynamics of *The Winter’s Tale*. As I tried to argue, Leontes’ obvious attraction to Perdita, who is “As like Hermione as is her picture” (5.1.73), affirms once again his readiness to fall for the simulacrum, a propensity that Paulina skilfully manipulates to secure a restorative ending, an ending that in a truly ‘romantic’ manner artfully promises to deliver us the ‘real thing’ after all.

Having charted the circumference, I would now like to return to the heart of the matter, Shakespeare’s deployment of the Pygmalion myth. The first explicit reference to the existence of a statue is made casually. Paulina, it turns out, is an avid collector of art. Among the “many singularities” (5.3.12) that she possesses in her collection, her gallery contains a real treasure: a sculpture of Hermione, “a piece,” as the Third Gentleman informs Autolycus, “many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano” (5.2.95-6). The list of potential ‘owners’ of the statue has evidently been extended considerably in Shakespeare’s redeployment of the myth. Whereas in Ovid’s version the owner of the statue is also its ‘maker,’ the artist/king Pygmalion, Hermione’s sculpture, allegedly made by a well-known sixteenth-century artist, is clearly owned by Paulina, who expressly reminds the smitten king: “the stone is mine” (5.3.57). The only person who, ostentatiously at least, seems to have no hand in its making (since he has been quite ignorant of its existence) is Leontes.

The anachronistic reference to Giulio Romano (1499-1546) in *The Winter’s Tale* has provoked much commentary. It stands out as exceptional in the entire Shakespearean canon,

¹⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, Gower’s works were also heavily indebted to Ovid. For a study on Ovid’s influence on Gower see Bruce Harbert, “Lessons from the Great Clerk: Ovid and John Gower” in *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1988) 83-97.

where, to use Barkan's words, "references to real-life people are rare and to contemporary Italian artists otherwise nonexistent" ("Living" 655). Just like Shakespeare's use of Gower in *Pericles*, the invocation of a famous artist serves several dramatic purposes at once. Above all, the reference to Giulio Romano helps give credibility to the existence of the statue, conferring to it a certain artistry that disclaims any relation to myth. As Neville Coghill emphasises, "the audience must accept it *as a statue*, not as a woman," a piece of art whose skilful execution invites aesthetic appreciation (40). But there is more to this particular choice of sculptor than is at first apparent. In Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550), the pupil of Raphael is singled out specifically for his excellence at imitating life. Giulio's epitaph, quoted in Vasari, commemorates him as godlike creator: "Jupiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe and the homes of mortals made equal to those in heaven through the skill of Giulio Romano" (qtd in Barkan, "Living" 656). The statue's incredible (life)likeness – "he so near to Hermione hath / done Hermione, that they say one would speak to / her and stand in hope of answer" (5.2.99-101) – is thus made credible through the invocation of the 'rare Italian master' who, as the Third Gentleman reminds the audience, is a paragon of his art: "had / he himself eternity and could put breath into his / work, would beguile Nature of her custom" (5.2.96-98).¹⁸¹

While the artistic creator of the masterpiece is entirely absent in Shakespeare's dramatisation of the statue scene, an artistic director, the Venus substitute Paulina, whose continuous presence throughout the scene strengthens the female part in the procreative work, takes his place instead. In Shakespeare's remake, moreover, the intimacy of the artist's closet is replaced by the more reverent setting of a chapel, a theatrical space that has room for a considerably larger group of *dramatis personae*, all of which are present during the 'awakening'. Shakespeare, in effect, removes the scene from the obvious kinky eroticism that pervades the Ovidian relation, a pagan eroticism cum idolatry that has scandalised and fascinated Renaissance readers of Ovid, and relocates it in the realm of the sacred and the communal.¹⁸² In marked contrast to Ovid, moreover, Paulina's 'stone' is not merely conceived as an idolatrous object of male fancy. Even as a projective surface that is made subject to a meaning-conferring gaze, this 'sculpture' insists on the corporeal truth of its wrinkled im/perfection. What Paulina's statue represents, therefore, as Newcomb suggests, is "the spectacle of the body's survival under the pressure of the monumental" ("IP" 255). It is the fantasy of the living body, of Hermione "As

¹⁸¹ Ben Jonson also mentions Giulio alongside Raphael, Michelangelo and Titian as famous Italian painters "who were excellent, and emulous of the Ancients" (qtd. in Orgel, *Winter's* 57n1).

¹⁸² For a book-length study on the use of the resurrection trope in Shakespeare's plays and its religious allusions see Sean Benson's *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Raising the Dead* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2009).

she liv'd now" (5.3.32), not the stony replica that is intended to animate Leontes' petrified soul. Hermione's wrinkles are the material traces of difference that provide Leontes with the vital(ising) clue: this is and is not Hermione.

With promptings from Paulina, Leontes gradually warms to the tantalizing presence of the impossible: "Would you not deem it breath'd? and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?" (5.3.63-64). Using a language which – to recall Eagleton's words – is both "metaphorically transformative and sensuously precise" (102), Leontes becomes an active participant in a "rhetoric of animation," a performative language that finds its "culminating visual icon" in Hermione's 'resurrection' (Enterline, "You" 41, 40).

Willing signs of life into inanimate matter – "The fixture of her eye has motion in't" (5.3.67) – Leontes thus becomes alive to the epistemological potential of a "physiology of knowing" in which, as Bruce Smith puts it, "passions 'hear' sensations before reason does" ("Hearing" 168). Abandoning rational certitude in favour of a sensuous particularity of 'truth,' Leontes is ready to embrace the unruly sensuality of Hermione's body as animated and animating source of knowledge: "There is an air comes from her" (5.3.78). The affective potency of wonder was well known to the godfather of dramatic poetics, Aristotle, who was among the first to admit that sometimes it is the "scanty conceptions ... [that] give us, from their excellence, more pleasure than all our knowledge of the world in which we live; just a half-glimpse of persons that we love is more delightful than an accurate view of other things" (*Parts of Animals*, 1.5.644b, qtd. in Platt 5). Faced with the marvellous prospect of a living Hermione, Leontes abandons his former scepticism: "No settled senses of the world," he finds, "can match the pleasure of that madness" (5.3.72-73). By giving his sensual race the reign, Leontes, it transpires, has finally become "heir to my affection" (4.4.483).¹⁸³ While his sensitive appetites are appeased by visions of delight, Leontes' will is settled on the miraculous delivery of the real thing: "What you can make her do, / I am content to look on: what to speak, / I am content to hear" (5.3.92-93).

That the resuscitation of a statue is not an entirely harmless business is obvious. That it is not entirely lawful, either, becomes clear when proscriptions of idolatry, superstition and witchcraft are repeatedly invoked only to be brushed aside (cf. 5.3.43, 91, 97).¹⁸⁴ That its

¹⁸³ The original context of the quote is an interesting one since it contains the most outright validation of sensuality in the play: advised by his father to be reasonable about his 'affection' for Perdita, Florizel replies: "I am: and by my fancy. If my reason / Will thereto be obedient, I have reason; / If not, my senses, better pleas'd with madness, / Do bid it welcome. (4.4.483-86).

¹⁸⁴ On the religious resonances of this scene, especially in the context of idolatry, see Marion O'Connor, "Imagine Me, Gentle Spectators': Iconomachy and *The Winter's Tale*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 365-68, and Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000). I here follow Orgel's reading of magic less as being linked to religion than as a way to

apprehension requires a leap of faith suggests that Paulina's dramaturgy of passion has reached the final frontier of all that is 'sensible'. The "tragicomic theatergram of 'resurrection'" that Paulina is about to stage challenges not only the limits of theatrical representation (Henke 137); it also confronts, as Platt suggests, "the potential epistemological tyranny of the rational and posits the marvelous as means of overcoming this powerful source" (153). It is a spectacle so sensational that in order to maintain reasonable control of its effects, Paulina has to literally pull out all the stops of her dramatic art. Framed by what is the most heavily punctuated passage in the Folio – Coghill counts twelve colons in five lines (cf. 40) – the speech which cues Hermione's descent enacts a poised counterpoint of stillness and motion, marble and marvel, absence and presence, pathos and delight that effects in the mind's eye the very subject it feigns to deliver in performance: the metamorphosis of stone into flesh, of art into life:

Music, awake her; strike!
 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
 Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come!
 I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away:
 Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
 Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs: (5.3.98-103)

It might be anachronistic to read Paulina's dramatic figuration of the corporeal body as a demonstration of the epistemological complexities that 'trouble' the Butlerian performative, but it is intriguing to find that in both 'acts' the "*appearance of substance*" as Butler writes, is "a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the mode of belief" (*Gender* 141). As spectators our perception of the statue is mediated by Paulina's words that ask us both to believe and disbelieve what we are seeing – a (boy) actor playing Hermione playing a statue becoming flesh.¹⁸⁵ Thus, to appropriate an observation made by Celia Daileader, "by exploding the notion of inward truth, by positing surface as central, theatre demonstrates, time and again, the power of the palpable," a corporeality that can essentially only be rendered both through the affective 'touch' of words and images (64).

The restorative power of sensual pleasures, an idea which tragedy denies and comedy affirms, can only be fully materialised, it appears, through the theatrical magic of tragicomic romance; a magic, however, that with due adjustments for verisimilitude and understanding,

foreground theatre's "therapeutic catharsis ... through the marvels of representation and spectacle" (*Winter's* 62).

¹⁸⁵ In her cognitive reading of this scene, Naomi Rokotnitz stresses that in performance it is "the unequivocal realness of the flesh" coupled with the "embodied receptiveness" of the audience which dispels all doubt about whether Hermione is alive (34): "Hermione's living body communicates directly with our own" (35).

turns out to be “Lawful, as eating” (5.3.111). As sensuality co-acts with sense and imaginative faith redeems scepticism, Leontes is capable to “behold ... the statue move indeed” (5.3.87-88). The uniquely beneficial powers of performance which Heywood so passionately promotes in his *Apology for Actors* are here demonstrated in action: “so bewitching a thing is lively and well spirited action, that it hath the power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt” (sig. B4v). This is not something that can be achieved by narrative nor portraiture: “A Description is only a shadow received by the eare but not perceived by the eye: so lively portraiture is meerely a forme seene by the eye, but can neither shew action, passion, motion, or any other gesture, to moove the spirits of the beholder to admiration” (Heywood, sig. B3v).

Within Paulina’s gallery, therefore, the seeing of art is inherently connected with the art of seeing. The statue presents a concrete visualisation not only of what has been lost but also what must be found. Operatically passionate, Paulina’s spectacular detour strives to undo Leontes’ tragic penchant for the ‘marble constant’ through a homeopathic repetition of his ‘affection’. Within the performative space of Paulina’s art, the simulacrum that is placed between Hermione’s body and Leontes’ perception of it enables a series of hermeneutical and epistemological renegotiations. As Bishop notes, the scene “proceeds carefully backwards from the stance of the aesthete with his evaluative and technical gaze through the collapse or absorption of that distance into the more dynamic and interactive relations of the psychological, and finally the erotic” (163). To recognise his wife, in other words, Leontes must learn to ‘see her feelingly’. Finding Hermione’s hand “warm” (5.3.109), and not ‘too hot,’ it becomes evident that Leontes has not only been brought to his senses, but that both Sicilia’s body natural and politic have finally been restored, to invoke Wright once again, to the ‘temperature that vertue requireth’. An old tale, no doubt, that no one in their sensible mind feels like hooting at.

Rich and strange to the end, Shakespeare’s late foray into tragicomic dramaturgy in *The Winter’s Tale* may not in its entirety conform to the more moderate and, by implication, more ‘modern’ demands of Guarini’s temperate poetics; unsettlingly affective (and afflictive), it remains – to post-modern sensibilities at least – infinitely more pleasurable for all that.

4 “New matter still” – *Cymbeline*

My excursion into Shakespeare’s late romances concludes with an analysis of what may well be, in Alison Thorne’s words, the “strangest hybrid among all Shakespeare’s mongrel tragicomedies” (21). Thought to be composed more or less at the same time as *The Winter’s Tale*, *Cymbeline* – despite its happy ending – is the final tragedy listed in the *First Folio* of 1623 where it was also first published.¹⁸⁶ An action-packed fable about deception, decapitation, slandered virtue and virtuoso slander set in pre-Christian England, Wales and Rome, the play notoriously ends with no less than twenty-four dénouements.¹⁸⁷ Unwieldy in every aspect of its dramatic conception, *Cymbeline*, as Nevo puts it in a nutshell, presents “some of the knottiest problems in Shakespeare genre criticism, appearing to be neither fish, flesh nor good red herring, readable neither as history, comedy nor romance” (*Shakespeare’s* 63).¹⁸⁸

More than either of the late plays discussed so far, *Cymbeline* is marked (or, as most critics would have it, marred) by a diversity and eclecticism of style and content. A sundry mix of traditional folklore, British and Roman history, and pastoral romance, it comes across as a disjointed, if not dismembered affair, a motley of spare parts put together in such a manner that – to rephrase the words of Arden editor J. M. Nosworthy – we cannot help but see the puppets dallying.¹⁸⁹ Despite his commendation of the play as a whole, even Nosworthy concedes that it is almost impossible to overestimate just how great “a tissue of incongruities” it actually is (lxxvii). And he is not alone in this opinion. At the beginning of the twentieth-century actor/director/critic Harley Granville-Barker, even though much enthralled by the play’s “sophisticated artlessness,” finds himself confronted with “a very lopsided affair” (466, 461). Unable to account for the play’s complex and overtly contrived dramatic construction – “lapses from dramatic integrity” – Granville-Barker feels that he “[b]etter take shelter behind Johnson” whose profuse neoclassical indictment of the play has become the linchpin of a critical tradition of *Cymbeline*-bashing (500, 460):

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

¹⁸⁶ On the whole editors of the play seem to agree that *Cymbeline* was written around 1610 in close proximity to *The Winter’s Tale* although it could have been composed anytime between 1606 and 1611, at which point Simon Forman describes witnessing a performance of the play in his diary. For a concise survey on dating the play see Roger Warren’s introduction to his Oxford World Classic edition of *Cymbeline* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), esp. 63-67.

¹⁸⁷ David L. Frost refers to “approximately twenty-four different revelations” (32), while Granville-Barker counts a series of eighteen “surprises” (490).

¹⁸⁸ Nevo curiously neglects to mention tragedy among the variety of genres the play dallies with but refuses to commit to.

¹⁸⁹ The original quote reads: “we can almost see the puppets dallying” (Nosworthy xxxii).

of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation (S. Johnson 235).

Following close upon *Pericles* in terms of chronology as well as dramaturgy, *Cymbeline's* Achilles' heel – its stylistic oddities – has posed an even greater explicatory challenge. While *Pericles'* discrepancies could easily be dismissed on the grounds of mixed authorship and textual corruption, no such arguments hold for *Cymbeline*. Shakespeare's collaborator or interpolator, the whipping boy usually summoned in matters of dramatic and stylistic 'ineptitude,' has simply failed to materialise in a convincing manner. As Granville-Barker notes with some exasperation, in this play "the suspect stuff is often so closely woven into the fabric" (466).

No bastard child as in *Pericles*, then. Forced to concede that "[t]hough it be Shakespeare at his worst, it may still be Shakespeare," Granville-Barker insists, however, that it is "Shakespeare with a difference" (463, 477). In a struggle to accommodate this 'lawful' (and thus ultimately more disturbing) offshoot of Shakespeare's late generic spleen, *Cymbeline* was consequently fashioned both on page and stage as the product of a playwright who must have been "somewhat at odds with himself" (Granville-Barker 461). While subsequent commentators have questioned the conclusive value of such biographical speculation, the notion that something is amiss with this baroque creation where there is so 'much ado about everything' still pervades more recent criticisms of the play.¹⁹⁰ "*Cymbeline*," as Stephen Williams writes in the *Radio Times* in 1951, "is one of the most enchanting and one of the most exasperating plays ever written. And we can surrender fully to its enchantments only by turning a deaf ear or blind eye to its exasperations" (17). Indeed, it is intriguing to find how many studies on *Cymbeline* carry negative prefixes in their titles, most of which relate to issues of (faulty) perception or misleading appearance.¹⁹¹ Subjected to close critical scrutiny even the body of the text, the playscript itself, has been found to harbour a typographical mistake: the name of the play's much cherished heroine, Imogen, has recently been disclosed as a Folio misprint.¹⁹² In many ways, a truly 'posthumous' recognition.¹⁹³ And one, I would like to argue,

¹⁹⁰ "Much Ado About Everything" being the alternative title that literary critic Northrop Frye champions for the play (65).

¹⁹¹ To list but a few: Cynthia Lewis, "'With Simular Proof Enough': Modes of Misperception in *Cymbeline*," *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991): 343-64; Brook Thomas, "*Cymbeline* and the Perils of Interpretation," *New Orleans Review* 10.2 (1983): 137-45; Alison Thorne, "'To write and read / Be henceforth treacherous': *Cymbeline* and the Problem of Interpretation," *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, eds. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999) 176-90; John Scott Colley, "Disguise and New Guise in *Cymbeline*," *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974): 233-52.

¹⁹² For a concise summary of the evidence supporting 'Innogen' as the name Shakespeare intended to be used for his heroine see Warren's notes on character names in his edition of *Cymbeline* (265-69). In the following, I will be using this spelling variant. With its overtones of innocence, it invests the character with a symbolic name, a distinguishing feature that Innogen shares with the heroine-daughters of the other late plays (Marina, Miranda, Perdita).

that is closely linked to *Cymbeline*'s vested interest in material (mis)readings of all kinds. A 'headless' play in many respects, much of the scholarly unease with *Cymbeline* is fuelled by the macabre scene in which Innogen mis-takes Cloten's decapitated corpse for that of her husband's. For F. D. Hoeniger, to name but one critic, such "grotesque irony" ("Irony" 223) is misplaced in the context of a play that otherwise, in the words of early eighteenth century critic Charles Gildon, "smell[s] rankly of *Romance*" (419).¹⁹⁴ Theatre practitioners of that time, on the whole, agreed. In performance, the play's hair-raising dramatic effects were either identified as defects by theatre directors such as William Hawkins, who consequently altered the plot to suit neoclassical tastes for his Covent Garden production in 1759, or, with the dawn of a more modern age, as a call to experiment. As Stephen Orgel notes in his review of Danny Scheie's 2000 production of the play for Shakespeare Santa Cruz, "consistency was never an issue" ("*Cymbeline*" 278). Instead, Orgel finds that Scheie's anarchic celebration of a decentered *Cymbeline* acknowledges "the genuine craziness of Shakespeare's conception" and thus "remain[s] true to its manic energy" ("*Cymbeline*" 285).

Put simply, therefore, one could say that *Cymbeline* refuses to 'fit'. And it is surely no coincidence that this word and its derivatives occur more frequently in this play than in any other that belongs to the Shakespearean corpus.¹⁹⁵ For it is in this "dramatic romance" more than in any other, I would like to argue, that clothes and bodily accessories rather than the physical bodies themselves (make) matter (Hazlitt 1). As John Scott Colley observes: "In no play does Shakespeare so fully rely upon costume and disguise as in *Cymbeline*" (234). It is the degree to which Shakespeare "realize[s] his dramatic ends through visual and poetic uses of garments and changes of garments" that distinguishes *Cymbeline* from its romantic playmates (Colley 235). It is, to use Paola Colaiacomo's expression, as if we are presented with a "sartorial metatheatre" in which the garment is given "a role to perform which takes it very close to being a character on its own" (67).¹⁹⁶ Where, as the opening scene of the play suggests, faces

¹⁹³ In his chapter on "Shakespeare's 'Opus Posthumous' – *Cymbeline*" in *Becoming Posthumous: Life and Death in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001) 33-58, Jeremy Tambling investigates the various associations of the term 'posthumus' in the play, something he links to the 'untimely'.

¹⁹⁴ Again, as with the bear scene in *The Winter's Tale* it appears that Shakespeare was experimenting with the emotional range of pastoral romance, stretching it to its tragi-comic limits. Also, as Warren points out, it is important to bear in mind that much of the romance material *en vogue* in Shakespeare's time displays incidents of corporal violence that put the more "bizarre moments" in *Cymbeline* (and indeed in Shakespeare's other late plays) in perspective (*Cymbeline* 18).

¹⁹⁵ According to Maurice Hunt, the word does in fact occur twenty-one times in the play (cf. "Fittings" 73-74).

¹⁹⁶ The pervasiveness of textiles in the play was visually conveyed in Anthony Ward's set for Adrian Noble's 1997 RSC production of the play in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, where the stage was covered by a large sheet of cloth that changed shape to suggest various locations or properties.

can be ‘worn’ (cf. 1.1.13), where the body is staged as a ‘fashionable’ guise, or (to borrow Palfrey’s more modern turn of phrase) as a “mutating mannequin,” it is clothes which are looked upon as ma(r)kers of identity (89). That shirts can easily be ‘shifted’ is a truism that most of the figures in *Cymbeline* must face, and – as in Innogen’s case – in a very literal sense, too. That they can also, as King Henry V points out in *Henry IV, Part 2*, “deeply [be] put ... on” (5.3.52), become part of or even possess the wearer and ‘fashion’ him/her within, is a notion crucial to an understanding of a play in which “Clothes and bodies merge and separate in perverse and vagrant fashion” (Stallybrass, “Worn” 301).

In the following, I thus want to revisit one of the ‘hotspots’ of recent critical involvement with the play, the issue of (mis)reading, to interrogate, or rather unravel it from a sartorial perspective. I will show that the bodies that materialise in this play are – in a more overt sense than in the previous plays discussed – textured.¹⁹⁷ As vested sign that requires reading, the ‘body beneath’ appears insufficient as a guarantee of truth and is instead “touched and haunted by the material it inhabits” (Jones and Stallybrass 206). Turning from bodily subjects to material objects, I will follow the ‘things themselves’; the rings, bracelets, handkerchiefs, clothes, and letters that exchange hands through the course of the action. I will investigate the meanings that are re-inscribed in their forms, their uses and their trajectories within the narrative of the play and beyond, retracing the path of the wandering ring that, as in the traditional German children’s singing game of the same name, magically makes bodily subjects appear (and disappear) into being.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ In his article on “Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage” in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), Stallybrass draws attention to the close affinity between the cloth and the printing trade, suggesting that the sheets of paper used for writing were produced from the rags of clothes and bedsheets until the use of wood pulp in the nineteenth century (306-307). In this way, both “book and theatre alike,” Stallybrass concludes, “wrenched cloth from its place within a system of patronage and reinserted it within a market economy” (“Worn” 307).

¹⁹⁸ As part of this game a ring or a coin is passed from one child’s hand to another while everyone sings: “Little ring, little ring, you must wander, from the one hand to the other, oh how pretty, oh how cruel, no one must detect the jewel” (translation my own).

4.1 Absent Origins

1 GENTLEMAN

You do not meet a man but frowns: our bloods
No more obey the heavens than our courtiers
Still seem as does the king's.

2 GENTLEMAN

But what's the matter?
(*Cym.* 1.1.1-3)¹⁹⁹

Cymbeline opens with a conclusive reading of the body: body language, the frowning that pervades Cymbeline's court, is here taken to be the outward expression of an unruly internal state both in a physical and in a political sense. The diagnosis of such imbalance, grammatically registered by a double negative, is couched in an impressionistic syntax that is elliptic, if not downright incomprehensible. Mannerist language, it appears, is once again at the forefront of what Palfrey describes as a "disintegration of organicist securities" (87).²⁰⁰ The First Gentleman's report, a digest that is meant to bring his companion (and the audience) up to speed on the state of affairs at court, is instead teeming with figurative analogies that are elaborately 'extended' only to be euphuistically 'crushed' (cf. 1.1.25-26), something that creates a sensation of breathlessness and incoherence. In the face of such otiose verbosity one repeatedly finds oneself asking, like the bewildered Second Gentleman, "But what's the matter?" (1.1.3).

It is, in short, a curious exposition that we are presented with. Despite the large amount of plot information that is imparted in a seventy-line question-and-answer session – the king's and queen's opposition to Innogen's marriage, the rejected suitor-brother, the abducted princes – its main "theme" (1.1.39) or subject, an appraisal of Posthumus, refuses to 'story': "I cannot delve him to the root" (1.1.28), the First Gentleman finds.²⁰¹ He is, of course, ostensibly referring to Posthumus' genealogy, an inventory of reshuffled names and titles the issue of which, we are told, is 'Posthumus Leonatus,' the fatherless son, whose very name denies him an autonomous identity. Literally translated, the Latin *postumus* is the superlative for

¹⁹⁹ William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (London: Arden Shakespeare-Thomson Learning, 2002). All ensuing quotations from *Cymbeline* are taken from this edition, unless stated otherwise.

²⁰⁰ For recent writing that attempts to furnish a profile of Shakespeare's late poetic idiom through detailed stylistic analysis see Russ McDonald's *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

²⁰¹ This transitive use of *story* can be found in the second exposition scene of the play (1.5) in which an assessment of Posthumus' reputation is again the subject of much speculation, this time amongst the gentlemen of Rome: "How worthy he is I will leave to appear hereafter, rather than *story* him in his own hearing" (1.5. 33-34, my emphasis). According to the *OED*, the transitive use of *story* was very common in the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, when the meaning, "to relate in a history" was only gradually beginning to be replaced by its later use, "to tell the story of" ("Story").

post meaning after; according to the *OED*, the term is generally used for “anything which appears after the death of its originator” (“Posthumous”). The anglicised term ‘posthumous’ began to appear in the English language towards the end of the sixteenth century mostly in connection with a child that was born after the death of his father or of writing published after the death of its author (cf. “Posthumous”). That Posthumus’ worth as well as his very being remain strangely supplemental is a result of what I would like to call (with a linguistic wink of an eye) the ‘post(humus) semantics’ by which he is being delivered.²⁰² Here is how Posthumus is introduced by the First Gentleman:

He that hath miss’d the princess is a thing
 Too bad for bad report: and he that hath her
 (I mean, that married her, alack good man,
 And therefore banish’d) is a creature such
 As, to seek through the regions of the earth
 For one his like; there would be something failing
 In him that should compare. I do not think
 So fair an outward, and such stuff within
 Endows a man, but he. (1.1.16-23)

Rather than providing us with substance, an impression of Posthumus the subject, we are presented with a ‘creature’ whose very being, like his name, is shrouded in *parenthesis*, “a word or phrase,” the *Concise OED* clarifies, “inserted as explanation or *afterthought*” (“Parenthesis,” my emphasis). Again, it appears, the stylistic digression matters.²⁰³ Posthumus’ character is essentially introduced by what Puttenham identifies as an ‘auricular’ figure of disorder, “*Parenthesis* or the Insertour,” an “unnecessary parcel of speech” (2, 160). The ‘stuff within’ that is meant to define Posthumus is therefore more ‘fleshed out’ than filled in by the highly ambiguous and digressive description that, like the rest of the expository text, raises more questions than it answers. As Palfrey notes, the “strange sense that the praise lacks a centre has the effect of inverting a precise direction to idolize the hero” (84). British actor Roger Rees, talking about his experience of tackling the role for the 1979 Royal Shakespeare Company production directed by David Jones, similarly finds himself confronted with the “need ... to find the man inside the hero, inside the words of the script that made up the hero’s thoughts and actions, so that when I came to perform him I could be a man first and foremost, and a warrior and saviour later” (143). Posthumus’ reputation, as Iachimo suggests later in the play, is thus based on ‘word’ rather than ‘matter’:

²⁰² The coinage here alludes to the neologism Elam uses to propose a revised or “post(humous) semiotics of Shakespearean drama” (“In what chapter” 159).

²⁰³ For Tambling *parenthesis* is even the dominant trope of the play’s language (cf. 34).

This matter of marrying his king's daughter,
wherein he must be weighed rather by her value than
his own, words him (I doubt not) a great deal from the
matter. (1.5.14-17)

A paragon of virtue he may be, but like the mirror he is being compared with – “A sample to the youngest ... a glass that feated them” (1.1.48-49) – Posthumus is effectively being furnished with no more quality than that: as projective surface, he is subject to whatever anyone cares to read into him.

Contrary to what one would expect, this effect is not remedied by the appearance of the protagonist himself. While Innogen's impulsive as well as uncompromising character is linguistically laid bare in ten lines full of exclamation marks and imperatives, Posthumus' inaugural speeches are more circumspect: studiously couching the ardour of his affection in the effete and clichéd protestations of the banished lover, one cannot help but feel that his concern for his reputation (as man and loyal husband) outweighs a 'heartfelt' concern for his wife's predicament. With a directness characteristic of all the heroines of Shakespeare's late plays, Innogen voices her disappointment at such feeble leave-taking: “Were you but riding forth to air yourself / Such parting were too petty” (1.2.41-42). Having “throw[n] her eye / On him” (5.5.395-396), Innogen's attachment to Posthumus, on the other hand, is as passionate as it is fixed, something that is conveyed through the ocularcentric imagery used to describe her attachment:

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

Here, keeping an eye on the beloved is interpreted in literal terms. It offers a glimpse of a sensory landscape where “after-eye[ing]” (1.4.16) is understood as an active process that creates a physical, almost tactual hold on the observed. The physical power invested in looking is also conveyed in Innogen's complaint that by having to stay behind at court, she will have to endure “the hourly shot / Of angry eyes” (1.2.20-21) administered by her angry father. Despite the fact that ocular anatomy in the sixteenth century offered increasing evidence to support a version of the Aristotelian theory that the eye was a passive receptor of light, Innogen's description draws on an older but persistently popular notion that the process of seeing was

actively controlled by its perceptual agents, the eyes.²⁰⁴ According to the extramissive theory of vision (originally proposed by Plato and later refined by Galen), the eye emits a kind of inner fire or ‘sight-beam’ that coalesces with daylight to touch the object of its focus, a theory that was eventually supplanted by the ‘ocular truth’ provided by optical investigations of the early seventeenth century: in 1604 Johannes Kepler paved the way for modern optics with his description of the formation of the retinal image (cf. Jütte 39).²⁰⁵

For Innogen words evidently present insufficient recompense: the transient presence of spoken language cannot fill the sensory and sensual void created by physical absence. Something more substantial is evidently required here, and in the true spirit of courtly love the couple duly proceeds to exchange love tokens, material instantiations, or what Arjun Appadurai calls “incarnated signs” of their bond, that reveal as much about what they value as how they relate to each other (38).²⁰⁶ Whereas Posthumus’ “manacle of love” (1.2.53) seems to translate ‘bond’ into bondage, a bracelet to keep his “fairest prisoner” (1.2.54), Innogen’s diamond signifies not restraint but strength, the strength (and constancy) of feeling that unites mother and daughter, husband and wife: “This diamond was my mother’s; take it, heart; / But keep it till you woo another wife, / When Innogen is dead” (1.2.43-44). While Posthumus’ manacle thus indicates a lack of trust (and, in economic terms, lack of ‘worth’) and literally commodifies his desire to handcuff handfasted Innogen, Innogen’s diamond is endowed with material significance of a different sort. Staged as an object that has been touched, loved and worn, it is embodied with personal history, memories, and social relations that give it a life of its own.²⁰⁷ Both investments, as the course of the play shows, are not without their problems. Where objects function as material reminders, it is an unforgivable affront to treat them as exchangeable commodities – something Posthumus (like Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* or Bertram in *All’s Well That Ends Well*) has yet to learn; on the other hand, the very notion that such ‘incarnations’ can escape circulation – something Innogen evidently wishes to believe – is

²⁰⁴ For a brief history of the development of optical theory, see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976). For an illuminating speculation on the progressive “denarrativization of the ocular” that, according to Martin Jay, coincides with the scientific discoveries of the early modern era (51), see Jay’s chapter on “The Noblest Senses: Vision from Plato to Descartes,” in his *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 21-82.

²⁰⁵ The Platonic idea of the ‘firing’ eye also re-appears in Iachimo’s phenomenological account of Innogen’s captivating appearance: “this object, which / Takes prisoner the wild motion of mine eye, / Firing it only here” (1.7.102-04).

²⁰⁶ In his introduction to *The Social Life of Things* (1986), a collection of essays examining how things are sold and traded in a variety of social and cultural settings, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai explores “the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different *regimes of value* in space and time” (4).

²⁰⁷ For the distinction between ‘object-as-commodity’ and ‘object-as-object,’ see also Jones and Stallybrass 7-11.

mercilessly exposed as romantic fantasy. As Maurice Hunt maintains, when the couple parts at the end of the scene, the impending loss of the “corporate married body” is metaphorically underscored in the “progressive figurative transformation of Posthumus’ body into things of little value” (“Dismemberment” 414): aboard the departing ship, the body that is vanishing out of sight is metonymically superseded by that “glove, or hat, or handkerchief / Still waving” (1.4.11-12).

4.2 Present Imaginings, or: How to (Un)Do Things with Words

‘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.
(*Cym.* 5.4.146-49)

Parted from her husband, Innogen finds herself caught in the trappings of a well-worn dramatic predicament, entailing “A father cruel, and a step-dame false, / A foolish suitor to a wedded lady, / That hath her husband banish’d” (1.7.1-3).²⁰⁸ Exiled to Italy, Posthumus becomes entangled in narrative weavings of a different sort. In a scene that begins like a common joke on nationalist stereotypes (“Enter Philario, Iachimo, a Frenchman, a Dutchman, and a Spaniard” [1.5. Stage direction]), the playful banter between the men assembled at Philario’s house quickly spirals into what Valerie Wayne describes as a “European Olympics of female worth and attemptability,” in which the woman’s part (in various senses) is up for grabs (“Woman’s” 292). The literary motif of the wager – alleged sources range from Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (Second Day, Ninth Story) to the anonymous fifteenth-century German folktale *Frederyke of Jennen* – provides the narrative context by which the previously invaluable love gifts, the incarnated signs of the vow exchanged between Innogen and Posthumus, become valuable commodities, i.e. are given a price and are put into circulation (cf. Wayne, “Woman’s” 292).

In Iachimo’s opening gambit, the questionable economic worth of Innogen’s ring is linguistically conjoined with the questionable sexual worth of Innogen herself, or more specifically, her chastity:

... If she went before others I
have seen, as that diamond of yours outlustres many
I have beheld, I could not believe she excelled many:

²⁰⁸ A possible nod to *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, the anonymous court romance first printed in 1589. As Shakespeare’s principal source its plot shapes Innogen’s plight in *Cymbeline*.

but I have not seen the most precious diamond that
is, nor you the lady. (1.5.69-73)

Posthumus, ostensibly refusing to buy into the logic of a gendered economy in which ‘any lady = she = that diamond’ then ‘not ... she = most precious = the lady,’ replies with a sentence that grammatically reproduces the very conflation he is so keen to reject: “I praised her as I rated her: so do I my stone.” (1.5.74), i.e. ‘her = rated = my stone’. Even though Posthumus insists that there is a difference between a marketable commodity such as a ring, which “may be sold,” and a woman’s ‘honour,’ which is “not a thing for sale” (1.5.79, 81), Iachimo is not fooled. Just because something is not for sale, he suggests, this does not mean that it is also exempt from circulation: “Your / ring may be stolen too: so your brace of unprizable / estimations” (1.5.86-88). Iachimo, in other words, “reassert[s] commodification through the threat of theft” (Wayne, “Woman’s” 291). Posthumus’ belief that he is the only one who ‘possesses’ the jewel/his wife’s chastity is exposed as naive delusion: “You may wear her in title yours: but you know / strange fowl light upon neighbouring ponds” (1.5.85-86). Women’s infidelity, Iachimo suggests, is endemic, built into their deficient DNA, so to speak: “If you buy / ladies’ flesh at a million a dram, you cannot preserve / it from tainting” (1.5.131-33). Iachimo, like *Othello’s* Iago before him, effectively exploits his opponent’s ‘anxious masculinity,’ a heightened sense of his dependence on Innogen’s chastity for his sense of worth:²⁰⁹ “I make my wager rather against your / confidence than her reputation” (1.5.107-08). As Ambrogiulio, Iachimo’s counterpart in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, explicates: “among all married men in every degree, the notes are so secret of their wives imperfections, that the sharpest sight is not able to discern them: and the wiser sort of men are willing not to know them; because shame and losse of honour is never imposed, but in cases evident and apparent” (qtd. in Bullough 8: 53). Instead of challenging the slanderer on the spot, Posthumus initiates a commodity exchange that effectively facilitates the provision of such ‘invisible’ proof: “I dare you to this match: / here’s my ring” (1.5.143).

Here, then, is the first instance in the play where an incarnated object strays from its pre-ordained path to establish a new social relation: the ring, originally a material token of marital union given to “keep ... till you woo another wife” (1.2.43) – a transferral that was to only take place “When Imogen is dead” (1.2.44) – has been turned into a pawn for a homosocial

²⁰⁹ The term ‘anxious masculinity’ alludes to Mark Breitenberg’s book of the same title. Breitenberg reads the pervasive masculine anxiety about female chastity and women’s sexuality in general as “the internalization of specifically social tensions that are endemic to the early modern sex-gender system, the very tensions that produce the masculine subject in the first place” (13). A discourse largely played out between men, it becomes a way to “confirm their identity through a shared language of suffering and distress,” identifying a common adversary: the sexually insatiable woman (Breitenberg 12).

negotiation that enables another man to gain possession of Innogen's "dearest bodily part" (1.5.146):

If you can make'tt apparent
That you have tasted her in bed, my hand
And ring is yours. (2.4.55-57)

When he parts with Innogen's ring, Posthumus not only parts with his sense (cf. 1.2.49), he also negates his wife's integrity long before he commands her actual murder later in the play. As Nevo puts it: "The wager makes Imogen a mere object through which a bond with Iachimo is cemented: either he will become his friend ... or his chastiser" (*Shakespeare's* 73). By giving up the ring that ties him to Innogen, Posthumus certifies that he can be a man amongst men rather than a man to a woman. In the hands of men, therefore, the ring in this play not only becomes a visible sign of women's "commodification, containment, circulation, and devaluation through exchange," it also materialises "their exclusion in early modern theatrical representation" (Wayne, "Woman's" 303).

In view of the normative patriarchal assignations of gender difference and guilt offered in the wager scene, it is particularly intriguing to find that Iachimo's ensuing 'voyage' on Innogen's body offers everything *but* ocular proof of female inconstancy. Instead it serves only to expose, as Martin Orkin has noted, "the unruly aspects of a wandering, labile, rhetorically and intellectually as well as corporeally treacherous masculinity" that we have already encountered in the form of Leontes's unruly imaginings in *The Winter's Tale* (92). In this context it is interesting to note that Iachimo's lengthy verbal seduction scene appears to be unique to Shakespeare: there is no direct exchange between the Iachimo and Innogen counterparts in Shakespeare's sources. Thus, *Frederyke of Jennen's* Iachimo figure, Johan of Florence, having arrived in Jennen to speak to Ambrosius's wife finds that "whan that he came in her presence for to speke to her, he durste not, bicause that he founde her so womanly in her behauoure" (193), while Boccaccio's Ambrogio, hearing that Bernardo's wife is "reputed to be the onely wonder of women," deems her unassailable and without further ado proceeds to carry out the trunk manoeuvre (qtd. in Bullough 8: 54). What then, is the matter with/of Shakespeare's verbose Iachimo?

Armed with a letter of introduction by Posthumus, Iachimo is ensured of a heartfelt welcome by Innogen, who is eager to hear some news about her exiled husband. In the presence of Pisanio, Posthumus' loyal servant, Iachimo initially launches into a rant about men's incapacity of judgement in a series of perplexing images, couched in so eccentric a syntax that, as Innogen's interjections suggest ("What is the matter, trow? ... Are you well?")

[1.7.46-50]), his meaning is all but comprehensible.²¹⁰ Literally talking “garbage” (1.7.49), Iachimo exposes the unsuspecting Innogen to an onslaught of somatic evocations that border on the abject. “Sluttish” is syntactically coupled with “appetite” (1.7.44,43), while semantically distended sentences effectively replicate that “sate yet unsatisfied desire” (1.7.47) that keeps men “allur’d to feed” where it should “vomit emptiness” (1.7.46, 45). Once the ever-watchful Pisanio has been successfully dispatched on an errand, however, Iachimo changes his rhetorical tack. Assuming the tone of a light-hearted gossip, he informs an increasingly bewildered Innogen that her previously so melancholically-disposed husband is known as “the jolly Briton” (1.7.67) in Rome, where he comes across as “merry and gamesome” (1.7.60), constantly on the ready to crack the odd misogynistic joke. Through a combination of elliptical reticence, semantic circumlocution and syntactic suspense, this “fairy-tale Iago” manages to convince Innogen that he is downplaying some of the less savoury aspects of Posthumus’ behaviour in order to spare her the truth about his ‘real’ character (McDonald 125). Before long, she can stomach no more: “discover to me / What both you spur and stop” (1.7. 97-98). This is evidently the cue Iachimo has been waiting for. Without further ado, he launches into a full-blown panegyric of Innogen’s physical attractions, “promiscuously marshal[ing],” to use Orkin’s words, “one provocative conceit after another” even as he alleges Posthumus’ sexual intemperance (89):

Had I this cheek, to bathe my lips upon: this hand, whose touch
 (Whose very touch) would force the feeler’s soul
 To th’ oath of loyalty: this object, which
 Takes prisoner the wild motion of mine eye,
 Firing it only here; Should I (damn’d then)
 Slaver with lips as common as the stairs
 That mount the Capitol (1.7.99-104)

The insinuations within this erotic texture are not lost on Innogen: whereas Posthumus ought to be transfixed, focused only on (or rather, manacled to) the ‘object’ of his love, he has instead chosen to roam abroad, geographically as well as sexually: “My lord, I fear, / Has forgot Britain” (1.7.112). Encouraged by this first sign of defeat, Iachimo continues his rhetorical assault, picking up on previous images of her despoliation before he climaxes his sonic depiction of Posthumus’ sexual rapacity (“he is vaulting variable ramps” [1.7.134]) with an overt sexual proposition: “I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure ... Let me service tender on your lips” (1.7.136-40).

²¹⁰ In fact, the syntactical properties of Iachimo’s initial address to Innogen is reminiscent of the introductory lines of the play that equally revolve around the question of Posthumus’ worth.

In a sense, therefore, Iachimo's 'speech acting' articulates J. L. Austin's notion of the performative utterance, of saying as a form of doing:²¹¹ "I am the master of my speeches, and would under- / go what's spoken, I swear" (1.5.137-38). Iachimo uses language to compel erotic submission and he is so effective (and affective) because his speech acts are always also, to re-invoke Butler, bodily acts: with Iachimo especially, I would like to argue, "spoken words are, strangely, bodily offerings: tentative or forceful, seductive or withholding, or both at once" (Butler, *Undoing* 172), and they are so compelling because they are directed towards the body of the addressee – Innogen's body as well as that of the audience:²¹²

I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure,
More noble than that runagate to your bed,
And will continue fast to your affection,
Still close as sure. (1.7.136-39)

Like all speech acts (being bodily), however, Iachimo's promises 'say' more than he intends. And, taking him at his very word, Innogen 'hears' more than Iachimo wants her to. With a directness that belies the vulnerability of her actual situation (and contrasts markedly with Posthumus' ready compliance), she renounces his libidinous overture for what it is, an "assault" (1.7.150) on her virtue as well as Posthumus' reputation, something that only serves to reveal Iachimo's own depravity: "If thou wert honourable, / Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not / For such an end thou seek'st, as base, as strange" (1.7.142-44). Here Iachimo's 'doing,' in other words, is his 'undoing': it is found out to be at odds with his intent, his flattery is deciphered as abuse.

Unfazed, Iachimo quickly changes tack and responds with an overblown praise about Innogen's steadfastness and Posthumus' superiority. Mollified by his apologetic oratorical salve, Iachimo's final request, uttered just as he is about to leave, catches Innogen off guard. Readily she agrees to safeguard his precious cargo, a trunk of valuables, in words infused with unsettling dramatic prescience in light of what is to come:

Willingly:
And pawn mine honour for their safety, since
My lord hath interest in them; I will keep them
In my bedchamber. (1.7.194-96)

In Iachimo's case, therefore, Ben Johnson's dictum that '*Language* most shewes a man' is

²¹¹ Austin discusses this definition of "performative utterance" or "performative" in *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); see esp. 5-6.

²¹² On the bodily dimension of the speech act see also Butler's "Afterword" in Shoshana Felman's brilliant cross-disciplinary approach to speech act theory, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003) 113-23.

especially pertinent: linguistic manner determines literal matter. Intrusive speeches and audacious stylistic mannerisms show Iachimo for what he is, “a figure of disorder, a trespasser who ... inserts himself into Imogen’s bedchamber, disrupts the marriage of Posthumus and Imogen, and ‘breed[s] great confusion’” (McDonald 122).

In Elijah Moshinsky’s televised adaptation of the play (first shown in the UK in 1983 as part of the BBC Television series), Iachimo’s divagatory language is given opulent flesh in Robert Lindsay’s smouldering, dark-eyed and leather-clad Iachimo, who skilfully accosts Helen Mirren’s pensive Imogen, encased in a rather demure-looking dress complete with the pointed stomacher and high-necked chemise typical of 1640s Dutch fashion.²¹³ One of very few attempts to translate the play to the screen, Moshinky’s adaptation is particularly successful in conveying the erotic (sub)text of this scene in tone and movement.²¹⁴ Initially held in check by the enforced stiffness of the Flemish antechamber surroundings in which the scene takes place, Lindsay’s Iachimo, seated one chair apart from Innogen, slickly closes the physical distance between them with his elliptical “That others do / (I was about to say) enjoy your –” (1.7.89-90). The profile shot of the camera here effectively catches the barely concealed desire in his gaze in juxtaposition with Innogen’s responding confusion and distress. Bodily contact climaxes with a whispered “Revenge it” (1.7.135), at which point a mesmerised Innogen finds herself almost kissing a complete stranger. With visible effort, she tries to regain her argumentative ground by putting physical distance between herself and Iachimo. Heading towards the doorway, however, she allows herself to be cornered once again when Iachimo asks for forgiveness. With her back literally up against the wall, Mirren’s Innogen relents and, in the end, does not seem to be entirely displeased by the kiss with which Lindsay’s Iachimo releases her manacled hand.

More than any other figure in the play, then, Iachimo comes vested with a language that enables him to get under everyone else’s skin or, in Innogen’s case, to the very mole on (or, as Iachimo later maintains, under) her breast. The bedroom scene in the second act has elicited much critical comment, focusing mostly on Iachimo’s specular violation of Innogen, which is

²¹³ Mirren’s dress in this scene seems to be modelled on Rembrandt’s portrait of Agatha Bas (1641). Bas was a member of the Amsterdam Mennonites who were distinguished by their sobriety of dress. In the context of the discussion of this play’s fascination with material objects is interesting to note that in Rembrandt’s painting the tactile realism of the lace and fan – the apprehensible reality of mundane objects – stands in marked contrast to the diffuse and almost veiled depiction of the sitter’s face – the unfathomable subject.

²¹⁴ According to the British Universities Film & Video Council’s *International Database of Shakespeare on Film, Television and Radio* (<<http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/>>), the only other moving image adaptations to date are comprised of one 1913 silent film version directed by Lucius J. Henderson and the recently released *Cymbeline* (2014). Directed by Michael Almercyda, this feature film is set in the biker gang scene of twenty-first century America, and is aptly taglined “Don’t lose your head.” Ethan Hawke as Iachimo never appears to make much headway with Dakota Johnson as Innogen, who is repelled by his somewhat clumsy advances from the start.

shrouded in sensually and sexually evocative language.²¹⁵ Again, this is a notion effectively translated in Moshinsky's filmic adaptation. The scene is filmed by candlelight in close-up or medium shots in which the dark, sinister figure of a bare-chested Iachimo looms over or crouches next to the sleeping Innogen (and the viewer with him). The intimacy of television with disturbing efficacy demonstrates the way in which desire is "concentrated in an intensity of seeing, a lust of the eyes," something which turns the viewer into a voyeuristic accomplice (Nevo *Shakespeare's* 77). As Moshinsky explains, he combined the "filmic technique of close-up and time-lapse and silhouettes and menacing shots and the suggestion of his [Iachimo's] nakedness, so he has a rather potent sexual force" (qtd. in Fenwick 17). In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, the latent threat of this 'sexual force' is figuratively transposed onto the narrative subtexts that populate the scene. Ranging from classical myths and legends to material Shakespeare worked on previously (*Rape of Lucrece*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Titus Adronicus*), these 'tellings' are clearly more than sub- or secondary in significance to the 'showing,' something that is indicated once again by the conspicuous way in which Shakespeare flaunts his artistic debts. Not only is a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* one of the central props in this scene, the whole setting of this private theatre turns out to be richly contextualised:²¹⁶ as Brian Gibbons has suggested, painting, tapestry and sculpture in Innogen's bedchamber provide a variety of deflective interpretative frames for intimate erotic encounters and their outcomes (cf. 97). Whereas Innogen's conspicuous bedtime reading, we later learn, consists of the "intising [sic] rimes" of "wanton Ovid," the disreputable poet of erotic licence derided by Tudor moralists, Iachimo clearly champions a different (though no less 'honey-tongued') author/ity (John Fletcher qtd. in Beaumont, sig. A4r). Explicitly expressing his kinship with the legendary Roman king and rapist Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (535 - 496 BC), Iachimo's first lines after extricating himself from the trunk invoke the story of a woman's rape in words and images that recall Shakespeare's own poetic take on female sexual violation, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594):

... Our Tarquin thus

²¹⁵ Harriet Walter recalls that when performing this scene for Bill Alexander's 1987 production at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, she experienced it as "the ultimate [scene] in passive vulnerability, right down to the virginal white nightie" (209). For a critical analysis of the scene's staging of violence, see also Bettina Boecker, "You Like to Watch, Don't You? Violence in *Cymbeline*," *Wissenschaftliches Seminar Online* 4 (2006): 13-22, Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft <http://shakespeare-gesellschaft.de/uploads/media/WSO_4_2006.pdf>.

²¹⁶ In Scheie's 2000 production of the play for Shakespeare Santa Cruz, this (sub)textual referentiality is turned into a visual gag – the book Innogen reads here is the *Riverside Shakespeare* edition, with the name Ovid pasted across it. It is interesting to note that even though attention is drawn to the book at the beginning of the scene, its title and subject is only identified towards the end, possibly in order not to morally implicate Innogen who is, after all, 'guilty' of reading a poet with a dubious moral reputation. For the dramatic role of the book on Shakespeare's stage, see Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), esp. 43-56.

Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd
The chastity he wounded. (2.2.12-14)

Even though the invocation of Tarquin arouses expectations about the potentially tragic outcome of this scene, Iachimo's peeping Tom clearly is not Shakespeare's "lust-breathed Tarquin" (*Lucrece* 3). As Granville-Barker puts it: "No tragically-potent scoundrel, we should be sure, will ever come out of a trunk" (512).²¹⁷ The real 'penetrating' threat to "the walls of thy dear honour" (2.1.62), Innogen's chastity, is closer to home. As the Cloten interludes framing this scene make clear, her step-brother's single-minded intent to possess her is never really cloaked by any attempts at rhetorical wit. Quite the reverse: in comparison with Iachimo's linguistically more refined suggestions of defilement, Cloten's crass sexual innuendo and punning is blatantly to the point. Thus, finding himself barred from Innogen's bedchamber, Cloten justifies his pertinacity in the following manner:

I am advised to give
her music a mornings, they say it will penetrate.
Enter musicians.
Come on tune: if you can penetrate her with your
fingering, so we'll try with tongue, too: if none will
do, let her remain: but I'll never give o'er. (2.3.11-15)

Iachimo's agenda, as his language would have us believe, is more complex. Allusions to literal rape are sublimated into exclamations of literary rapture just as the language of rapacious desire is substituted for the devotional awe and blazonic commodification of courtly love.

Apostrophe, the rhetorical figure Puttenham calls the "Turn-Way or Turn-Tale" which "breedeth by such exchange a certain recreation to the hearers' minds," leads the way as he finally lays eyes on Innogen asleep in her bed (323):

Cytherea,
How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! fresh lily!
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!
But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,
How dearly they do't: 'tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o'th' taper
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,
To see th'enclosed lights, now canopied
Under these windows, white and azure lac'd
With blue of heaven's own tinct. (2.2.14-23, my emphasis)

²¹⁷ The comparison is nevertheless an interesting one. Shakespeare's *Lucrece* distinguishes itself from other adaptations of the myth in that Tarquin's fatal attraction is here being triggered by Collatine's praise of his wife's superior virtue: as in Iachimo's case, therefore, it appears that it was "that name of 'chaste'" that "unhapp'ly set / This bateless edge on his keen appetite" (*Lucrece* 8-9).

The potentially violable woman of flesh and blood is here linguistically ‘re-created’ or re-staged as an abstract deity: Aphrodite, the goddess of love that is infinitely desirable but ultimately untouchable. Hyperbole and periphrasis – the latter figure especially “holding somewhat of the dissembler by reason of a secret intent not appearing by the words, as when we go about the bush” (Puttenham 277) – qualify the specular violation while any intimation of transgressive desire is essentially held in check by the poetic anatomising or blazon of parts of Innogen’s body, her lips, eyes, skin. This contrasts with the more explicit sexual invasiveness of the male gaze that is described in Shakespeare’s narrative poem. In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Tarquin initially “gazeth’ lustfully on Lucrece’s chaste bed” (366), and although the sight of Lucrece herself momentarily tempers his desire – “His rage of lust by gazing qualified” (424) – his gaze soon turns predatory (cf. 496). Similarly, the language from the beginning projects the impending rape in violent imagery; instead of ‘soft pressing,’ *Lucrece* has ‘griping’ and ‘pricking’ (see esp. 302-322).

Blazon, a term which originally signified a codified heraldic description of a shield, in sixteenth century France and late sixteenth century England was also used to denote a codified poetic tradition, “a richly ornate and mannered evocation of idealized female beauty rendered into its constituent parts” (Sawday, *Body* 191). According to Sawday’s erudite study on the ‘body emblazoned,’ this particular literary convention flourished with the dawn of what he calls “the culture of dissection” (*Body* 2):²¹⁸

In England, the language of the blazon developed poetic tropes which were peculiarly consonant with an emerging ‘science’ or knowledge of the body. Discovery (in the geographical and rhetorical senses) determined this trope, which was soon allied with emerging discourses of commerce and trade. (Sawday, *Body* 198)

The language of poetical sexual union meets the language of commerce when Iachimo somewhat abruptly cuts short his reverie and, as Christy Desmet puts it, exchanges “the penis for the pen” to commence with an inventory of commodities (of which Innogen’s body is just one) in a manner that aligns him more with Jennen’s calculating merchant than with Shakespeare’s impassioned rapist (66):

But my design.
To note the chamber: I will write all down;
Such, and such pictures: ...
Ah, but some natural notes about her body
Above ten thousand meaner movable

²¹⁸ In fact, the most celebrated examples of the French *blason* were the *Blasons anatomiques du corps féminin* (1543), an anthology of poems in which each text focused on a separate part of the female body (cf. also Sawday, *Body* 193).

Would testify, t'enrich my inventory. (2.2.23-30)

As part of this ideology of male possession the female body is therefore disclosed only to be appropriated, poetically soft-brushed for display, and eventually “subjected to an economy of trade, commerce and mercantile distribution” (Sawday, *Body* 198). All in all, this is not a far cry from the business conducted in the brothels of *Pericles*' Myteline.

Just as in the wager scene it is a bodily token, the bracelet, that stands in for the woman's part and, in extension, that 'slippery' quality, chastity. As Iachimo is keen to demonstrate (and Posthumus no less eager to find verified), it is something which can be parted with just as easily as a bracelet can be stripped of its owner's arm:

Come off, come off;
[Taking off her bracelet.
As slippery as the Gordian knot was hard.
'Tis mine, and this will witness outwardly,
As strongly as the conscience does within,
To th' madding of her lord” (2.2.32-37)

In such a sexual economy, to extend Sawday's argument even further, collecting tokens of the female body is a “token of mastery” (197); it asserts male prowess through ownership of a capital investment, the “brace of unprizable / estimations” (1.5.87-88). The most intimate 'love-spot' is duly recorded with the dissective precision of the natural scientist: “On her left breast / A mole cinque-spotted: like the crimson drops / P'th bottom of a cowslip” (2.2.37-39). With this precious find, it appears, Iachimo's mission is accomplished. He is clearly more excited by the fantasy of divulging, or indeed, 'blazoning' this scopie trespass to his rival – that Posthumus will be forced to “think I have pick'd the lock, and ta'en/ The treasure of her honour” (2.2.41-42) – than by the actual object of desire, the semi-naked body in front of him, for, as Nancy Vickers puts it: “to describe is ... to control, to possess, and ultimately, to use to one's own ends” (181).²¹⁹

The scene ends as it began: noticing Innogen's reading matter, Iachimo's poetic take re-stages the infamous story of male sexual violence – Philomela was raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law, King Tereus of Athens – as an instance of wilful female sexual surrender: “She hath been reading of late, / The tale of Tereus, here the leaf's turned down / Where Philomel gave up” (2.2.44-46). As if these multifarious textual trappings were not bewildering enough,

²¹⁹ Compare also Olivia's ironic appropriation of the blazon in *Twelfth Night*, a play that exposes the commodificatory process at the core of this genre: “my beauty ... shall be / inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to / my will” (1.5.239-41). As Stephen Greenblatt sardonically notes in his chapter on “Shakespearean Beauty Marks,” it “is no accident that the best blazon of Shakespeare is of a horse” (24).

Iachimo, reporting back to Posthumus, weaves an even richer tapestry of intertexts into the fabric of his tale, detailing the various pagan erotic scenes that decorate Innogen's bedroom – much to the chagrin of her slowly unravelling husband.²²⁰ Once again, Iachimo flexes his rhetorical muscles to tragic effect: his extended *ekphrasis* or vivid description, “so rarely and exactly wrought” (2.4.75), forces Posthumus to vicariously envision what he would rather not: a panorama of intimate sites “well worth watching” (2.4.68).²²¹ As before, Iachimo's linguistic trespass is so effective because it is performative. Here is how Erasmus describes the usage of ekphrasis in his widely-used style manual *De Copia*, compiled while he was professor at the University of Cambridge in 1511: “We shall enrich speech by description of a thing when we ... *place it before the eyes painted with all the colors of rhetoric*, so that at length it draws the hearer outside himself *as in the theatre*” (qtd. in Altman 270). According to Puttenham's sixteenth-century anatomy of rhetoric, figurative language is so effective because of its synaesthetic impact: “the ear is no less ravished with their current tune than the mind is with their sententiousness,” something that “breed[s] no little alteration in man” (281). Puttenham's coercive conceit is followed through in his conclusive statement on the power of the skilful orator: “whosoever have skill to compass and make yielding and flexible, what may he not command the body to perform? He therefore that hath vanquished the mind of man hath made the greatest and most glorious conquest” (281). Ekphrasis is particularly effective in this respect, as the imaginary ‘visions’ it generates rival the emotional impact brought about by the real experience. Whereas Leontes, therefore, is unhinged by what he thinks he sees and/or hears when watching his wife interacting with Polixenes, Posthumus is brought to a similar state simply by envisioning what he is being told. Expanding on Erasmus' definition, Joel Altman concludes:

Ekphrasis, then, might be said to be quintessentially theatrical, since it can invite critical attention to itself as performance yet also brackets that performance to infiltrate, captivate, and illustrate with images the mind of the listener, effecting through skilful

²²⁰ Considering the variety of textual and textural allusions that furnish the bedroom scene in *Cymbeline*, it is interesting to note that Philomela, having been forcefully silenced (Tereus cuts out her tongue to prevent her from publishing his crime), famously resorts to weaving a tell-tale account of her violation into a piece of cloth or tapestry (in some versions a robe). Unfortunately, Posthumus fails to see that the true story behind Iachimo's ‘knowledge’ of Innogen's body is more accurately represented by the famous bathing-scene on the chimney-piece: Innogen is chaste Diane, violated by Actaeon's gaze.

²²¹ In his performance of this scene for David Jones's RSC production of the play in 1979, Roger Rees recalls that “we elected to assume that they [Philario and Posthumus] had just come from taking a Turkish bath ... thus providing a situation at which Iachimo could catch Posthumus at his most vulnerable (i.e. without his trousers on) when he relates his apparent conquest of Imogen's virtue and fidelity” (148). Rees also toyed with the idea of playing the misogynistic diatribe which follows “exposed in every respect,” but in the end was persuaded to wear “a pair of Anglo-Saxon boxer-shorts” instead (148).

mimetic expression of its content both intellectual and emotional conviction – ‘as in the theatre.’ (274)

Posthumus, in other words, is verbally ‘brainwashed’ or even ‘brainwaved’ into believing that he has been given ‘ocular proof’ of his wife’s infidelity. Iachimo sets the scene with vivid descriptions of Innogen’s inner sanctum, a place, Posthumus now jealously recalls, from which he was often barred: “Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain’d, / And pray’d me oft forbearance” (2.4.161-62). Concrete sensual detail, the “tapestry of silk and silver” (2.4.69) that furnishes the primal *mis en scène*, is supplemented with erotically charged visuals of Cleopatra (meeting her lover), Diana (bathing), and “winking Cupids” (2.4.89). With Posthumus’ passions already running high, Iachimo pulls the fatal rabbit out of his hat when he ‘airs’ the very object that materialises the inviolable love bond: the bracelet. As it is paired with the fatal ring, this tangible trophy loses its incarnate charm: “The vows of women/ Of no more bondage be ... Than they are to their virtues, which is nothing” (2.4.110-12). Posthumus has clearly fully bought into Iachimo’s ideology of anxious masculinity: as ‘slippery’ commodities, these accessories make palpable the anxieties and aspirations that formed part of their conception: the fantasy of ownership. Under Iachimo’s direction, personalised tokens of love are exposed as non-exclusive. Innogen’s ring, having exchanged (male) hands, becomes a glaring reminder of the emasculating power of the ‘woman’s part’: it is “a basilisk unto mine eye, / Kills me to look on’t” (2.4.107-08).²²² Posthumus clearly no longer needs the proof of a “corporal sign” (2.4.119). Iachimo’s possession of ring and bracelet is evidence enough: “‘Tis true ... ’tis true ... he hath enjoy’d her” (2.4.123, 126). In the terms of humoral psychology, as Altman explains, “with the aid of reason the newly actualised fantasy shapes ... cognitions that tell the subject ‘this is such and such,’ arousing passions appropriate to the cognition” (275). Philario’s cautionary interjection that “this is not strong enough to be believed” (2.4.131) merely meets with incoherent misogynistic expletives from Posthumus’ side. As Pisanio later diagnoses, “a strange infection / Is fall’n into thy ear” and a “poisonous tongue ... hath prevail’d / On thy too ready hearing” (3.2.3-4, 5-6). Any kind of rational ‘cognition,’ in other words, is already tinged by a predisposition towards humoral imbalance. As with Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale*, we have already been given hints of a deeper physical malaise at work here. In Posthumus’ case it is his melancholic disposition that helps to explain his susceptibility to Iachimo’s imaginative

²²² In this context it is also interesting to note that, according to Stallybrass and Jones, “English common law attempted to limit the share of personal property or gifts that a wife could own independently” (234). Having examined the wider question of the ownership of moveable goods and clothes in legal documents of the time, they come to the conclusion that a husband could legally claim control to all his wife’s possessions, even to the gifts given by him to his wife (cf. Stallybrass and Jones 235). Innogen’s essential ‘crime,’ therefore, is simply that her actions (and by extension her body) are not determined by her husband’s desires.

stirrings. As Innogen points out to Iachimo: “When he was here / He did incline to sadness, and oft-times / Not knowing why” (1.7.61-63). Lost in a tailspin of melancholic passion, Posthumus is consumed by the need to eradicate the part played by woman - a (pur)suit that verbally and mentally aligns him with his ‘Other,’ ‘brutish’ Cloten: “O, that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal! / I will go there and do’t, i’t’h’ court, before / Her father. I’ll do something” (2.4.146-48).²²³ Iachimo’s ekphrastic staging may be fictional but its effects are real enough: it takes less than one hundred lines of text for Posthumus to write off his wife and to compose the letter that commands her assassination. Interestingly, however, once he rejects bracelet, ring, and, in extension, “[t]he woman’s part in me” (2.4.172), it is Posthumus who physically disappears from the play for two acts only to return, in habit as in outlook, a changed man.

4.2.1 Re-staging the Woman’s Part

Before venturing further into the complex negotiations between showing and telling, seeing and believing which the play seems intent on exploring, I want to take a short speculative detour to examine what it is, or rather, what else it could be that is being staged in this scene. After all, bed scenes in Shakespeare’s tragedies and tragi-comedies, as Stallybrass has pointed out, deliberately draw attention to a state of undress, “to the process of shedding those garments through which class and gender were made visible and staged” (“Transvestism” 65). Why then does the “Renaissance theatre stag[e] its own transvestism” at such dramatically tense moments (Stallybrass, “Transvestism” 77)? Consciously foregrounding the body literally or symbolically about to be exposed, these scenes appear to invite the spectator to speculate on the ‘naked truth beneath’ the dramatic dressing. The early modern spectator is in effect asked “not to *imagine* the boy actor as he is dressed *up*, but literally to *gaze* at him whilst he *undresses*” (Stallybrass, “Transvestism” 70). Rather than glossing potentially confusing and/or embarrassing anatomical revelations about the boy actor’s sex, Shakespeare appears to be going out of his way to exhibit them by focusing the spectator’s attention “on one of the sites of cultural differentiation of gender” (Stallybrass, “Transvestism” 71).²²⁴ Thus, instead of

²²³ Compare the tenor of Cloten’s revenge fantasy: “With that suit upon my back, will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valour, which will then be a torment to her contempt ... and when my lust has dined ... to the court I’ll knock her back, foot her home again” (3.5.138-46).

²²⁴ In his highly intriguing excursion, Stallybrass goes on to suggest that on the Restoration stage the exposure of breasts became common practice for the revelation of the ‘woman beneath’. Occasionally

following *Frederyke of Jennen's* lead, where Iachimo's counterpart conveniently spots a wart on his victim's arm ("it fortun'd that her lefte arme laye on the bed; and on that arme she had a blacke warte" [196]), Shakespeare models his scene on Boccaccio's version, merely investing the latter's rather prosaic anatomical reference to a "wart upon her left pappe, with some few haire growing thereon" (qtd. in Bullough 8: 55) with a little more poetic flourish: the hairy wart is thus transformed into a "mole cinque-spotted: like the crimson drops / I' th' bottom of a cowslip" (2.2.38-39). Its anatomical location, however, confronts us with the real site/sight of sexual difference: the woman's part; if not to spectate, then at least to speculate, as it is questionable how much physical detail was actually visible to the contemporary theatre audience. According to Stallybrass, the play between "indeterminacy and fixation" that is made possible through this scene's "contradictory fetishisms," resists "the sexual and narrative teleologies which would be developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" ("Transvestism" 80, 79). For the purposes of this study I would like to argue that the presentation of contradictory fixations that are brought to a head in this scene – the imagined body of a princess, the staged body of a boy actor, the material presence of clothes and of symbolic objects – mobilise the dynamic of the play at large. What we are made to witness in this scene is not so much the undressing of the body but, to invoke Butler once again, the literal 'undoing of gender,' a staging of the notion that "gender itself is a fetish, the production of an identity through a fixation upon specific 'parts'" (Stallybrass, "Transvestism" 77).²²⁵ In other words: there cannot ever be a single naked truth in performance, only a dramatically "fantasized biology of the 'real'" (Stallybrass, "Transvestism" 77). The eye-witness account of Henry Jackson, an Oxford cleric who saw *Othello* performed at the University in 1610, gives an inkling of this:

Moreover, that famous Desdemona killed before us by her husband, although she always acted her whole part supremely well, yet when she was killed she was even more moving, for when she fell back upon the bed she implored the pity of the spectators by her very face. (30)

The use of feminine grammatical forms in Jackson's description, originally written in Latin, shows Jackson's rapt engagement with the female character's predicament. It is an engagement in an illusion of femininity that persists even while he pays tribute to the (male) actor's skill in presenting it. We tend to recognise femininity by seeing female body parts (breasts, hair, facial

this 'discovery' seems to have been coupled with and later replaced by the removal of the wig (cf. "Transvestism" 66).

²²⁵ Compare also Butler's definition of the body in *Undoing Gender*: "the body is that which can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation" (217).

features) or outward signs (clothing, make-up) that are taken as symbols of what lies beneath – yet in the theatre, and especially in a theatre where female bodies are absent, it is costume that is of the essence for such telling apart, while the anatomical body – here, as in all the scenes that involve an unconscious body in *Cymbeline* – is revealed to be, much like “changeable taffeta” (*Twelfth Night* 2.4.73), open to interpretation.²²⁶

4.3 The “rebellion of the cod-piece”²²⁷

After such wordy/worthy foreplay, it seems more than fitting to turn to what is, arguably, *Cymbeline*'s body proper, the flagrantly improper Cloten, whose status as displaced and obnoxious underbelly to Posthumus' disembodied nobility is paraded in ways too conspicuous to be ignored.²²⁸ The last but not least of Innogen's hapless suitors, 'Clot-pole' Cloten appears to be, in fact, beyond words, “a thing,” the First Gentleman stresses, “too bad for bad report” (1.1.17). Cloten's very name evokes associations that range from images of unformed or 'senseless' matter, such as a sod of earth, a lump of clay, or a block of wood, to figurative expressions of dullness and stupidity (cf. “Clod, n.”; “Clot, n.”). Ostensibly at pains to point out that Posthumus and Cloten are without equal (if for opposing reasons), the Gentleman's (sem)antics of the opening scene, however, seem to tell a different story. To summon up the infamous passage once more:

He that hath miss'd the princess is a thing
 Too bad for bad report: and he that hath her
 is a creature such
 As, to seek through the regions of the earth
 For one his like; there would be something failing
 In him that should compare. I do not think
 So fair an outward, and such stuff within
 Endows a man, but he. (1.1. 16-23)

'He that miss'd' and 'he that hath' may be semantically opposed but they are put on an equal

²²⁶ The full quote reads: “Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the / tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy / mind is a very opal.” (*Twelfth Night* 2.4.73-75)

²²⁷ *Measure for Measure* (3.2.110)

²²⁸ Several critics have picked up on this connection between Posthumus and Cloten. See, for example, Simon Palfrey's *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) esp. 91-99; James E. Siemon, “Noble Virtue in *Cymbeline*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 29 (1976), 51-61; Homer Swander, “*Cymbeline* and the ‘Blameless Hero,’” *English Literary History* 31.3 (1964), 259-70; Michael Taylor, “The Pastoral Reckoning in *Cymbeline*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), 97-106; Murray M. Schwartz, ‘Between Fantasy and Imagination: A Psychological Exploration of *Cymbeline*,’ 25 Aug. 2005, *PSYART: An Online Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts*, 26 July 2011 <http://www.psyartjournal.com/article/show/m_schwartz-shakespeare_and_psychoanalysis_between_f>.

footing by the anaphoric construction of the sentence. For Puttenham, anaphora is the “Figure of Report” – a direct translation of the Greek word in its Latin sense ‘to carry back’ (282). While that in itself is revealing, it is even more intriguing to find that in Puttenham’s time *report* had acquired the present meaning which encompasses both “account” and “reputation” (Ronberg 143). Through means of rhetoric, then, both Cloten’s and Posthumus’ story as well as their reputation are inextricably intertwined. And both are defined by the respective nature of their relation to Innogen, heiress to the throne of Britain. Instead of being distinguished by name, both are labelled with the same personal pronoun, an appellation that increasingly loses its identifying antecedent as the description progresses. The final assessment ‘I do not think / So fair an outward, and such stuff within / Endows a man, but he’ becomes equally applicable to both, linguistically anticipating their bodily conflation later in the play: far from being polar opposites, this passage insinuates, Cloten and Posthumus are actually hard to tell apart.

Unlike the nondescript Posthumus, however, Cloten, when he finally does take the stage, is everything but. His appearance in the third scene of the first act is heralded by his smell: “the violence of action,” his skirmish with Posthumus, makes him “reek as a sacrifice,” an odoriferous state which could be improved on, as the First Lord suggests in a statement full of dramatic irony, if only he would “shift a shirt” (1.3.1-2).²²⁹ Cloten’s response to this observation is as terse as it is brash: “If my shirt were bloody, then to shift it. Have I hurt him?” (1.3.45). Evidently not a man of many words, Cloten is given an introductory scene of merely 39 lines, most of which are taken up by the accompanying Lords’ witticisms and sardonic asides, verbal trimmings that only serve to stress Cloten’s single-minded brutishness. There could be no greater contrast to the refined if vapid eloquence that is Posthumus: Cloten’s personality materialises not only in maladroit elliptical emissions that revolve around Innogen’s rejection of his suit (in more than one sense, as it turns out) but also in his effluvious bodily secretions or, to be more precise, his sweat.

The First Lord’s initial comment “where air comes in, air comes out” (1.3.3) evokes the image of the average healthy body as “a dynamic and porous edifice” (Schoenfeldt 61). It is a body that “discusseth all fumes and sweat through the skin that is full of pores and holes”; passages, the Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505-1586) notes, God created to “purge forth the humours, and wash away the excrements” (qtd. in Schoenfeldt 13). Cloten, it transpires, is not a great believer in the benefits of deodorisation. In a Galenic regime where soundness of body and mind depends on careful humoral regulation, such indifference to bodily hygiene may be understood as another indicator (if not cause) of his moral turpitude. As

²²⁹ As will become apparent later in the play, it is *because* Cloten shifts a shirt, or rather a suit, that he will end up reeking like a sacrifice.

early modern dietician Dr Tobias Venner emphasises in his treatise *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam* (1650):

... the keeping of those ordinary and daily excrements, is very offensive to the body, by reason of the noysome fumes that ascend from them, which of all other parts chiefly annoy the head, causing dimnesse of the sight, dulnesse, heavinesse, headach, inflammation of the head; and not these only of the head; but the mind it selfe is oftentimes hereby disturbed and malancholicky affected. (322)

Shifting shirts, the undergarment in contact with the impurities generated by the body beneath, was not only deemed necessary to health, it also measured civility, wealth and good manners (cf. Vincent 52). In a biography about her husband William Cavendish (1592-1676), the prolific writer Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, commends her husband as being someone who “shifts ordinarily once a day, and every time when he uses Exercise, or his temper is more hot than ordinary” (193).²³⁰

Marking his presence by foul discharge both in word and body, Cloten, the Second Lord remarks, has always “smelt like a fool” (2.1.16). That this statement is charged with metatheatrical irony becomes clear when one considers that Cloten’s part in Shakespeare’s days was in all probability played by Robert Armin, Shakespeare’s star comedian, also known as ‘Snuff,’ a word which according to the *OED* could refer to an “expression of contempt or disdain” as well as “smell, odour, scent” (“Snuff”).²³¹ Assuming that Shakespeare did indeed write Cloten’s part with Armin in mind, Cloten’s princely status is from the beginning deliberately being undermined in its very cor(ps): his “rank” is rank (2.1.15). Cloten enters the stage as “embodied malapropism” (Palfrey 95), dressed in the easily recognisable body of the principal fool whose stunted physique also animates shape-shifting Autolycus in *The Winter’s Tale* and which would eventually flesh out Caliban, the “savage and deformed slave” that haunts Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (*The Tempest*, List of Roles).²³² In many ways resembling the natural fools sketched by Armin in his *Foole upon Foole, or Six sorts of Sottes* (1600), Cloten initially comes across as “the Abortive of wit, where Nature had more power then [sic] Reason, in bringing forth the fruit of imperfection, his actions are most in extremes, and the scope of his braine is but Ignorance: ... Hee is a kind of shadow of a better substance, or, like the

²³⁰ For the ways in which early modern writings on manners show the “emergence of the body as central subject and organising principle in the ideal of ‘courtesy’ or, a significantly new term, ‘civility,’” see Anna Bryson’s article on “The Rhetoric of Status: Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion, 1990) 136-53.

²³¹ Armin published his compendium on jesters, *Foole Upon Foole* (1600 ed.), under the pseudonym “Clonnico de Curtanio Snoffe” (Snuff, the clown of the Curtain Theatre) (Wiles 65).

²³² In his study on *Shakespeare’s Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), Wiles lists several references that allude to Armin’s diminutive stature. See esp. 148-49.

Vision of a Dreame, that yeelds nothing awake” (Breton 23). Partial to swearing, gambling and fighting, Cloten, as the Second Lord puts it, cannot deviate any further from gentility: “You are a fool granted, therefore your issues being foolish do not derogate” (2.1.46-47). References to Cloten’s extra-textual identity abound – I have counted some sixteen references to ‘fool’ and its derivatives – serving as a constant reminder of the ‘true’ make-up of Cloten’s “noble and natural person” (3.5.137). Donned with the costume of a prince but bodily, after all, merely representing the fool, Shakespeare’s Cloten as acted by Armin is the embodiment of Nicolas Breton’s “Unworthy Knight,” a stereotypical figure of disgrace that, as Breton pointedly suggests in his morality handbook *The Good and Badde* (1616), should not be found in any ‘Court of Honour’:

An unworthy Knight is the defect of Nature, in the title of Honour, when to maintain Valor, his Spurres have no rowels, nor his Sword a point; his apparell is proof, that may weare like his Armour, or like an old Engine, that hath his honour in ragges. It may be he is the Taylors trouble in fitting an ill shape, or a Mercers wonder, in wearing of Silke; in the Court he stands for a Cipher ...; Hee is worships [sic] onely for his wealth ... In summe, hee is the Child of Folly, and the man of Gotham, the blind man of Pride, and the foole of imagination: But in the Court of Honour, are no such Apes, and I hope that this Kingdome will breed no such Asses. (11)

The trouble is, of course, that not only do such asses breathe (and sweat) in Cymbeline’s court but also that they don the habits of ‘worthy knights’ who, in this play at least, never actually do seem to show up in princely apparel.²³³

Whereas the “baseness” (1.1.72) of Posthumus’ questionable origins is thus scantily redressed by a mythopoesis of nobility, a “catalogue of his endowments” (1.5.5) fortified mainly by the tell-tale heroic lineage of the marital Leonati, Cloten’s claim to greatness is based solely on being “son to th’ queen” (4.2.93); his gentility, much like that of the clown and his father in *The Winter’s Tale*, is essentially tailor-made: As Guiderius later in the play tells Cloten: “thy tailor, rascal, / Who is thy grandfather: he made those clothes, / Which (as it seems) make thee” (4.2.81-83).²³⁴ Reading this ‘lost’ body connection back into the play thus has crucial implications for the ways in which Cloten functions as a foil to/surrogate for Posthumus, especially in regard to the question of the readability of the body that is so pertinent to this play. Linguistically, protestations of difference are deconstructed as soon as they are uttered

²³³ Both Cymbeline’s sons (i.e. the royal heirs proper) and a rehabilitated (i.e. worthy) Posthumus only ever appear dressed in the ‘mean’ costumes of the “Briton peasant” (5.1.24).

²³⁴ The allusions to the proverb that clothes/tailors make the man again can here be interpreted to contain another in-joke: Robert Armin’s father, John, was a tailor in Norfolk and thus also the ‘maker’ of Armin the fool/Cloten the foolish gentleman (cf. Wiles 136).

and physically there appears to be no room for doubt: Cloten looks nothing like Posthumus.²³⁵ And yet, Cloten is able to take on Posthumus' princely 'suit,' something that in the tragi-comic climax of this play allows Innogen to (mis)take – in a very physical sense - the headless fool for the worthy knight. Defined by the properties of his “carcass and his cloth” (Palfrey 91), Cloten therefore literally ‘gathers to a head’ the play’s sexual and social anxieties, anxieties clearly endemic to a culture characterised by “a social atmosphere marked by increased instances of sartorial and social illegibility” (Bailey 47). It is this pervasive concern with sumptuary conformity that requires some contextual re-dress in order to get a better understanding as to why and how clothes matter in the world of *Cymbeline*.

4.4 Historical Trimmings

For the apparel oft proclaims the man.
(*Ham.* 1.3.72)²³⁶

The word *Person* ... in latine signifies the *disguise*, or *outward appearance* of a man, counterfeited on the Stage.... So that a *Person*, is the same as an *Actor* is, both on the Stage and in common conversation; and to *Personate*, is to Act, or *Represent* himselfe, or another. (Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1.16)

When Cloten, shortly before his dramatic toppling, voices his incredulity at being accosted by two young rustics, his words invoke a central cultural *topos*: “Know’st me not by my clothes?” (4.2.81). The play’s abiding concern with clothing, status and legibility serves as an important reminder that “being clothed ... was one of the most significant gestures of social organization in the Renaissance” (De Grazia et al., “Introduction” 10). Clothing or, as Erasmus called it, “the body’s body,” served as a signifier of social identity and as a means to display wealth and status (qtd. in Vincent 50). In fact, as Greenblatt points out: “What can be said, thought, felt, in this culture seems deeply dependent on the clothes one wears – clothes that one is, in effect, *permitted* or *compelled* to wear, since there is little freedom in dress” (“General” 57). Until it was repealed in 1604, shortly after James I’s accession to the English throne, state law had specified what fur, fabric and frill could be worn by different groups of society ever since the first

²³⁵ Cloten’s physical ‘*différance*,’ first embodied by Armin, has been brilliantly reconfigured in Paul Jesson’s Cloten for the BBC TV Shakespeare (dir. Elijah Moshinsky, 1983). Jesson, who incidentally also played the Clown in the BBC’s adaptation of *The Winter’s Tale* (dir. Jonathan Miller, 1981), plays Cloten as a ‘well-proportioned’ foppish prince, whose sense of entitlement and pompous demeanour, however, is comically undermined by a persistent speech impediment.

²³⁶ It is worth noting that this belief in the semiotic value of clothes is pronounced by Polonius, Councillor of State in *Hamlet*, who is famously duped into believing Hamlet is mad by Hamlet’s sartorial construction of an ‘antic disposition’: “his doublet all unbrac’d, / No hat upon his head, his stockings foul’d, / Ungarter’d and down-gyved to his ankle” (2.1.78-80).

English act of apparel was passed in 1336.²³⁷ Elizabeth I, herself renowned for her extravagant outfits, took a particular interest in the legal surveillance of dress. Not only was she the first monarch to include women in the 1574 rule of apparel, she was also responsible for issuing a total of twelve proclamations restraining the display of excessive apparel during her rule. Historians generally explain this “remarkable burst of Elizabethan regulatory fervour” as a sustained effort to buttress an established social order increasingly in flux (Vincent 118). In a progressively more urban, educated and socially mobile population, the “myriad indices of status ... overlapped, cancelled out, and qualified one another to the extent that gentility was at once easier to achieve and more difficult to define” (Bailey 29). The growing concern about social and sartorial illegibility is addressed in Stubbes’s *Anatomie of Abuses* (1595), in which Philoponus, the worldly-wise traveller, laments that “now there is such a confuse mingle mangle of apparell in England, and such horrible excesse therof, as euery one is permitted to flaunt it out.... So it is very hard to knowe, who is noble, who is worshipfull, who is a Gentleman, who is not” (71; lines 711-72). Stubbes’s observation homes in on the paradox at the heart of Elizabeth’s sumptuary project: state regulation of dress, as Susan Vincent has pointed out, developed alongside the growth of elite fashion (127). The increasingly expansive catalogues of prohibited items (such as foreign cloth) and illicit styles of dress listed in Elizabeth’s successive proclamations are a case in point. “Advertising alluring sartorial display,” as Vincent maintains, it is easy to imagine that these sumptuous listings were actually instrumental in “proliferating the very abuse they sought to curb” (142). After all, as Elizabeth herself demonstrated through her fashionable magnificence, control of dress was seen as coterminus with control of social power and influence.²³⁸ King James, in contrast to Elizabeth, did not appear to invest much effort in his own personal appearance. In fact, as one Italian visitor notes: “from his dress he would have been taken for the meanest among his courtiers ... had it not been for a chain of diamonds round his neck, and a great diamond in his hair” (qtd. in Ashelford 56). Nevertheless, social success at court was often a matter of divining the King’s tailored preferences about the appearance of his courtiers. Thus, in 1611 Sir John Harington is advised by Thomas Howard – seasoned courtier (and inventor of the flush-toilet)

²³⁷ The following account on the early modern culture of dress is indebted to Wilfrid Hooper’s article on ‘The Tudor Sumptuary Laws,’ *The English Historical Review* 30.119 (1915): 433-49, Amanda Bailey’s study on *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007), and Susan J. Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

²³⁸ See also Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey ‘Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I,’ in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, eds. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewelyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990) 11-35, for a consideration of the way in which clothing in Elizabethan portraits effaces realistic indications of the human anatomy to help promote an icon of superhuman magnificence and power.

– to appear at court “well trimmed; get a new jerkin well bordered, and not too short; the King saith, he liketh a flowing garment We have lately had many gallants who failed in their suits, for want of due observance of these matters” (qtd. in Vincent 104).

The site of sartorial struggle, as Stubbes’s diatribe suggests, was not merely confined to the upper orders. As luxury consumer goods became increasingly affordable to many outside of the nobility and gentry, donning the habits of the nobility became an accessible way for the rising social classes to visibly claim their admission to the elite, something that generated tremendous anxieties about clothing as a clear marker of social rank.²³⁹ Thus, the 1566 Proclamation by the Queen opens with:

The Queenes Maiestie consideryng to what extremities a great number of her subiectes are growen, by excesse in apparell, both contrary to the lawes of the realme, and to the disorder and confusion of the degrees of all states (wherein the veritie of Apparell hath taken place) and finally to the subuersion of all good order, by reason of reminisse and impunitie: Hath ... thought meete for some degree, towards a reformation thereof (Elizabeth I, *Proclamations* n. pag.)

Ben Jonson’s comical satire about the ambitious middle classes, *Every Man out of His Humour*, which was performed towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign, gives an inkling about this escalating obsession with self-display that led to an enormous expenditure on dress:

CARLO First, to be an accomplished gentleman, that is, *a gentleman of the time*, you must give o’er housekeeping in the country, and live altogether in the city amongst gallants; where, at your first appearance, ‘twere good you turned four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks of apparel
..... and be sure, you mix your self still with such as flourish in the spring of the fashion.... (1.2.33-39, my emphasis)

Times were clearly ‘a-changing’ and by the time James took over the throne, the attempts to legally restrict the privilege of costly dress (and the expenditure) were deemed obsolete, even though, as Vincent points out, “the next fifty years continued to see determined efforts to retrieve the control of appearances, and keep it as a matter for parliamentary prerogative” (6-7).

The emerging conception of dress as something changeable and potentially other to the social body whose rank, high or low, it was supposed to represent can also be registered linguistically. As Jones and Stallybrass have pointed out, it was only towards the end of the sixteenth century that the term *fashion* had acquired its present meaning of referring to “the

²³⁹ Even though Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have been unfamiliar with the modern concept of class, the early modern English society clearly revolved around determining social position in terms of degree or rank (cf. Innes 1).

mode of dress ... adopted in society for the time being” (1). Thus, Minister John Northbrook complains in his *Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes. With other Idle Pastimes* (1577): “What is a man now a dayes if he know not fashions, and how to weare his apparel after the best fashion?” (16). Written just after the first permanent theatres had been established in London, Northbrook’s treatise clearly already uses the term *fashion* in the modern sense, fashion-as-transformation, a notion that was in tension with the older meaning of the term, originally derived from the Latin *facere*, to make, and *factionem*, which referred to the characteristic (and thus enduring or constitutive) attribute of something, the cultural patterns of a society, or indeed its ‘habits’ i.e. fashion-as-incorporation (cf. Jones and Stallybrass 1-5). In Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker’s city comedy *The Roaring Girl, or Moll Cut-Purse* (published 1611), a perceived change in the style of playwriting is directly linked to a changing fashion in dress:

The fashion of play-making, I can properly compare to nothing, so naturally, as the alteration in apparell: For in the time of the Great-crop-doublet, your huge bombasted plaies, quilted with mighty words to leane purpose was onely then in fashion. And as the doublet fell, neater inuentions began to set vp. Now in the time of sprucenes, our plaies follow the niceness of our Garments, single plots, quaint conceits, lecherous iests, drest vp in hanging sleeues, and those are fit for the Times.... (Epistle, sig. A3r)

This metaphorical analogy also crops up in an earlier tract generally attributed to the Elizabethan actor, dramatist and possible spy Anthony Munday. In his contribution to *A Second and Third Blast of a Retrait from Plaies* (1580) he compares playwrights with tailors who re-fashion various pieces of someone else’s old clothing:

Tailors, who having their sheers in their hand, can alter the facion of anie thing into another forme, & with a new face make that seeme new which is old. The shreds of whose curiositie our Historians have now stolen from them, being by practise become as cunning as the Tailor to set a new upper bodie to an old coate; and a patch of their owne to a peece of anothers. (105-106)

Shakespeare, who according to the *Open Source Shakespeare Concordance* uses the word *fashion* and its derivatives 136 times in his works, appears to have been the first to use the verb form *to fashion* in the specific sense of “to counterfeit” and “to pervert” (“Fashion”).²⁴⁰ And well he might: as playwright and son of a glover he was, after all, part of an enterprise which, “far from reproducing the orderly transmission of a cloth economy, obsessively staged the misunderstanding of clothes” (Jones and Stallybrass 206). In a culture where the well-

²⁴⁰ The *OED* here lists references to *Much Ado* (“it better fits my blood to be disdained / of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any” [1.3.27]) and *Henry V* (“God forbid, ... That you should fashion, wrest or bow your reading” [1.2.13-14]).

documented religious and moral credo was, in the words of the militant Puritan barrister William Prynne, that “all men at all times” were obliged “*to be such in shew, as they are in truth: to seem that outwardly which they are inwardly,*” the sumptuary conceits peddled by the theatre could not but tantalise and affront (159).²⁴¹ The fact that the ‘common player’ merely needed to shift shirts to render illegible his true gender and social status, to personate his social superior or even his natural ‘inferior’ (i.e. woman) created unease especially in the antitheatrical faction, since to impersonate “is by outwarde signes to shewe them selues otherwise then they are, and so with in the compasse of a lye” (Gosson, *Playes* sig. E5r). Players are here put on equal footing with professional frauds whose performative skill is based on “simulation, disguise and self-transformation,” practices that had been viewed with deep suspicion by antitheatricalists from Plato onward (Pugliatti 1). According to Pugliatti, anxieties about unlicensed acting derived from an “unspoken and maybe half-conscious intolerance towards all forms of illicit and devious impersonation,” anxieties not unlike those derived from the improper ‘guising’ that was the subject of sumptuary regulations (10). The focal point of Gosson’s diatribe is based on appearance, the inappropriate fashioning of ‘outwarde signs’ such as clothes and gesture, “conventional signposts of social identity” which are turned into “mobile and manipulable reference points” (Agnew 9). Professional actors of Shakespeare’s time were in effect counterfeiters *par excellence*, donning a guise to personate or assume a character on stage while also having to ‘cloak’ their real line of work with protective livery off stage: after 1572 actors had to be either liveried as servant to a nobleman or risk being arrested, much like the ever shifty Autolycus in *The Winter’s Tale*. With the change in theatrical patronage in 1603, it was scarlet cloak and crimson velvet – the livery given to servants of the royal household – that visibly translated common actors into ‘King’s Men’.

Much to Gosson’s grief, sartorial unruliness was not limited to the world of the play. In his *School of Abuse* (first published 1579), he declares that “Ouerlashing in apparel is so common a fault, that the very hierlings of some of our players, which stand at reuersion of vi. s [sic], by the weeke, iet vnder Gentlemens noses in sutes of silke, exercising themselues too prateing on the stage, & common scoffing when they come abroad, wher they look askance ouer the shoulder at euery man, of whom the Sunday before they begged an almes” (sig. D2r). Accordingly, anti-theatrical invectives of the time were mainly directed at the “prophane spectacles” of commercial playhouses, hotspots of sartorial irreverence, whose economic success was largely dependent on the buying, renting and selling of clothes (Northbrook 91). Costumes were often comprised of aristocratic cast-offs used to pay players for performances

²⁴¹ Similarly, the homily “Agaynst Excesse of Apparell” (1563) makes clear that apparel should suit “euery one accordyng to his degree, as GOD hath placed him” (qtd. in Pugliatti 70).

at court. They were a playing company's most valuable asset, more valued even than its collection of plays. According to MacIntyre and Epp, the accumulated stock of professional companies such as the King's Men was in fact worth more than the cost of the theatre building itself (cf. 284). As Gurr notes: "The Earl of Leicester paid £543 for seven doublets and two cloaks, at an average cost for each item rather higher than the price Shakespeare paid for a house in Stratford" (*Shakespearean* 13). The display of opulent dress, as the Prologue of Thomas Middleton's tragicomedy *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (1611) suggests, was an important crowd magnet and thus likely to help increase revenue:

How is't possible to suffice
So many Ears, so many Eyes?
Some in wit, some in shows
Take delight, and some in Clothes;
.... (sig. A2r)

The Swiss traveller Thomas Platter, clearly impressed by the actors' outfits, notes during his visit in England in 1599:

The actors are most expensively and elaborately costumed; for it is the English usage for eminent lords or Knights at their decease to bequeath and leave almost the best of their clothes to their serving men, which it is unseemly for the latter to wear, so that they offer them for sale for a small sum to the actors. (C. Williams 167)

The theatres' vested interest in the vintage clothing trade did not go unchallenged. Thus, in 1572, Thomas Gylles, himself a 'lender of apparel,' lodged a formal complaint against the Yeoman of the Queen's Revels, who, "havyng alloen the costodye" of "hyr hyghnes maskes," is reported to be leasing out regal apparel at cut rates to "all sort of persons that wyll hyer the same" (qtd. in Feuillerat 409). Subjected to such "comen usage," "the great press of people and foulness both of the way and weather and soil of the wearers," the "glosse & bewtye of the same garments ys lost" (qtd. in Feuillerat 409). Ostensibly unique, the royal robes are thus felt to be stained by their commodification by "the meanest sort of mene / to the grett dyscredtt of the same aparell / which afterwarde ys to be shewyd before her heyghnes & to be worne by theme of great callynge" (qtd. in Feuillerat 409). As Jones and Stallybrass note: "It is because the costume can endure after the performance is ended that it can take a curious precedence over the actor" (177). Apart from the fact that this process of trading-off is similar to the circulation of objects in *Cymbeline*, this passage also serves to illustrate once again the degree of investment the early modern culture had in semiotics of clothing: "As the legitimating emblems of authority, these garments possessed a kind of social reality within the culture that the actors, and indeed much of their audience, could never hope to have. The actors and characters were fictions, but the costumes were the real thing." (Orgel, "Seeing" 105-06). It is

this extended identity or meaning, therefore, that was radically ‘shifted’ and interrogated through its re-appropriation and commodification by the commercial theatre, just as it is in the sartorial world of *Cymbeline*.

4.5 Dressing Down Nobility

To shame the guise o’th’ world, I will begin,
The fashion less without, and more within.
(*Cym.* 5.1.32-33)

When he voices his incredulity at Innogen’s choice of husband (“And that she should love this fellow, and refuse me!” 1.3.24), Cloten expresses the inappropriateness of such a union through the metonymy of dress: choosing to consort with “a base slave,” Innogen has debased herself (and thus the crown) with “[a] hilding for a livery,” a posthumous hand-me-down who is worth no more than “a squire’s cloth,” the garment worn by a servant (2.3.121, 123).²⁴² Innogen, however, is quick to reciprocate such dressing down with a scathing assessment of Cloten’s lack of moral ‘worth’: “Wert thou the son of Jupiter ... thou wert too base/ To be his groom” (2.3.124-126). Picking up on the clothing imagery, Innogen adds insult to injury when she clarifies:

His meanest garment,
That ever but clipp’d his body, is dearer
In my respect, than all the hairs above thee,
Were they all made such men. (2.3.132-135)

The First Folio reading ‘Heires’ is usually changed to follow the Second Folio spelling ‘haire’s’ as in the quoted excerpt above, which allows for a possible quibble on airs. However, the extent of Innogen’s insult is aggravated when it does suggest – in line with the First Folio reading – that the lowliest clothing worn by her husband (i.e. his underwear) is of more value to her than a claim to royal ancestry (cf. Stallybrass, “Worn” 309). Drawing on the humanist understanding of true gentility as being dependent on moral virtue, Innogen thus essentially questions the foundation of Cloten’s pedigree. Discussing the various types of nobility in his *Blazon of Gentry* (1586), genealogist and lawyer Sir John Ferne, for example, denounces “this kind of Gentry, being but a bare noblenes of bloud, not clothed with vertues” as being “the

²⁴² Some humour, here, would have been derived from the fact that the actor in the guise of prince is demeaning his own off-stage status: professional stage players like the King’s Men who were under royal patronage, were officially classed as ‘Grooms of the Chamber,’ servants of the royal household, and expected to wear the livery appropriate to this status.

meanest, yea and the most base of all the rest: for it respecteth but onely the body being deriued from the loynes of the auncestors, not from the minde, which is the habitation of vertue, the Inne of reason ... this gentry of stock only, shalbe said, but a shadow, or rather a painture of nobility” (15). It is a palpable hit: Cloten, who up to now has understood himself to be nobility incarnate (“I had rather not be so noble as I am” [2.1.18]), is literally rendered speechless. His incredulous invocations of the subject of contention “‘His garment!’ ... ‘His garment!’” are eventually augmented with the realisation “You have abus’d me: ‘His meanest garment!’” which is amplified into a performative promise: “I’ll be reveng’d: / ‘His mean’st garment!’” (2.3.155). But Innogen is no longer listening. Another object which has previously ‘clipped’ Posthumus’ body compels her attention: the “jewel, that too casually / Hath left my arm” (2.3.140-41). For the remainder of the scene, Cloten’s enraged invocations of the offending garment are interlaced with Innogen’s anxious evocations of the beloved bracelet, an object which, she fears, has taken leave of its rightful owner:

Last night ‘twas on my arm, I kiss’d it:
I hope it be not gone to tell my lord
That I kiss aught but he. (2.3.145-47)

The subject that is related to both objects in question is Posthumus, who has left “the print of his remembrance on’t” (2.3.42). Innogen’s account of her intimate relation with the wayward bracelet gives an inkling of the degree to which such vested objects in *Cymbeline* become autonomous agents, capable of betraying their owner. Whereas Innogen’s tale-telling bracelet projects the disastrous effects of confusing the objecthood of things with the narratives attached to them, the significant potency of the ‘meanest garment’ prepares the ground for a tragi-comic climax in which the subjecthood of both Posthumus and Cloten is determined by an exchangeable suit. The play’s central crisis is thus triggered by Innogen’s decision to “put[s] into contempt the suits / Of princely fellows” (3.4.91-92), opting to go with the ‘meanest garment’ instead. This decision is not without dramatic irony considering that later in the play it only takes a princely suit for her to misapprehend the ‘mean’ fellow underneath.

Cloten and Innogen are not the only ones who are confronted with mean materialities. Disillusioned, disappointed and disgusted by the discovery of what he now diagnoses as the defective “woman’s part” (2.4.172) in man, Posthumus’ noble persona temporarily exits the play at the end of act two with a notoriously vitriolic diatribe: “Is there no way for men to be, / But women must be half-workers?” (2.4.153-54). Not content with the damage he has done by his “too ready hearing” (3.2.6), Posthumus’ misconception of his wife’s character now drives the action of the play in the form of fatally cataclysmic writing: a letter luring Innogen to Milford Haven doubles as an assassination command that sets into motion a series of dressings

down in the play which – at a safe distance from court – literally as well as figuratively revolve around ‘meanest garments,’ ‘silly habits’ and ‘unaccommodated man’ – a society, in other words, that is under wear.

On receiving her husband’s directive to join him in Wales, Innogen, like the true romantic heroine she understands herself to be, fully embraces love’s counsel and resolutely “fill[s] the bores of hearing, / To th’smothering of the sense” (3.2.58-59): the only way is Milford Haven. Forsaking her rank by adopting “A riding suit; no costlier than would fit / A franklin’s housewife” (3.2.77-78) in order to reach her destination without delay, Innogen soon finds that this temporary social degradation is nothing compared with the complete personal annihilation she is about to suffer at the hand of a husband/lover who believes her to have “played the strumpet in my bed” (3.4.21). The unusual bluntness of Posthumus’ choice of diction in this matter effectively serves to penetrate even ears as romantically clogged as Innogen’s. As she tells Pisanio: “mine ear, / Therein false struck, can take no greater wound . . . to bottom that” (3.4.115-16). Posthumus’ letters, which up to this moment had served as reassuring tokens of the steadfastness of their love – “scriptures” that literally served Innogen as protective “stomachers to my heart” (3.4.82, 85)²⁴³ – have turned traitor – “Corrupters of my faith” (3.4.84) – and consequently become lethal. As Pisanio observes: “What shall I need to draw my sword? The paper / Hath cut her throat already” (3.4.33-34). On a par with Posthumus’ disillusionment about women’s steadfastness, Innogen now finds that “Men’s vows are women’s traitors” (3.4.55). Believing Posthumus to be fickle in his affection, Innogen likens herself to “a garment out of fashion” which, too precious to be simply discarded, must instead be “ripp’d: – to pieces” (3.4.54).²⁴⁴

A tokenistic “bloody cloth” (5.1.127) is indeed all that will be left of the woman’s part by the end of this scene. Dead to her husband and no one or nothing to return for, “No court, no father, nor no more ado / With that harsh, noble, simple nothing, / That Cloten, whose love-suit hath been to me / As fearful as a siege” (3.4. 133-36), Innogen finds it easy to “forget to be a woman” (3.4.156) and to embrace the lot of common man instead. The forceful mix of pragmatism and idealism that makes up Innogen’s character was visibly underscored in the 2003 RSC production directed by Dominic Cooke, where Innogen’s tell-tale ‘habit’ from the

²⁴³ A stomacher is the V-shaped panel that formed the centrepiece of a contemporary dress. Forming the front part of the bodice (or ‘bodys,’ to use the contemporary term for corset), the stomacher was lined with pasteboard or canvas and stiffened with strips of wood, whalebone or metal (cf. Ashelford 34). In addition, as the *OED* infers, *bosom* could also refer to “the space included between the dress and its covering,” which in turn could be used as “the receptacle for money or letters, formerly answering to the modern use of ‘pocket’” (“Bosom”).

²⁴⁴ This notion of being ‘ripped to pieces’ recalls both Posthumus’ desire to “tear her limb-meal” (2.4.147) and anticipates (in diction as in sentiment) Cloten’s revenge fantasy which involves raping Innogen whilst Posthumus’ “garments [are] cut to pieces before thy face” (4.1.17).

beginning of the play consisted of a cream-coloured 1930s silky ball gown complemented with sturdy black workboots. The contents of Pisanio's cloak bag – “doublet, hat, hose” (3.4.171) – is all that seems to be required, on the early modern English stage, “to fit you to your manhood” (3.4.169). In acting spirit (“This attempt I am *soldier* to, and will abide it with / A *prince's* courage” [3.4.185-86, my emphasis]) and in actor's body – in the Jacobean theatre at least – Innogen is, after all, “A man already” (3.4.168).

Like Innogen, Posthumus embarks on a remarkable fashion spree for the second half of the play. Having been absent from the action for two acts, he reappears on British soil a (visibly) changed man. The emblems of this change, just as in Innogen's case, are expressed through a series of material re-dressings. Unlike the ‘sea-tost’ Pericles, who is quick to coat his elemental state with the (albeit rusty) signifier of his noble parentage/peerage (“this coat of worth ... was sometime target to a king ... with it I may appear a gentleman [2.1.134-40]), fortune-crossed Posthumus deliberately throws in his lot with ‘unaccommodated man,’ disrobing himself of his adopted “Italian weeds” (5.1.23) and ‘suiting’ himself with the attire of a British peasant. The only precious adornment left is the “bloody sign” (3.4.127) of his most recent loss – the piece of cloth he has received from Pisanio as proof of Innogen's demise. This sartorial crisis was picked up in Peter Hall's 1988 production for the National Theatre, London, where Peter Woodward as Posthumus appears virtually naked, splattered in blood, wearing the bloody cloth like a kind of guerilla balaclava wrapped around his head. The newly penitent Posthumus therefore visibly distances himself from the man he was – the husband who ordered the execution of his wife for “wrying but a little” (5.1.5). As Adelman has pointed out, it is “one of the most extraordinary moments in Shakespeare: extraordinary because Posthumus recovers his sense of Imogen's worth not – like Othello or Claudio or Leontes – after he has become convinced of her chastity, but before” (Adelman 208). For once, it appears, the worth of woman has successfully been detached from the question of her chastity. Having ‘lost’ the jewel, Posthumus' dearest possession now is its substitute; a piece of “senseless linnen” (1.3.8) is the only remaining token of his wife that was. As Stallybrass maintains: “Having killed Imogen, Posthumus is forced to learn the value of the trace: the dearness of the ‘mean'st Garment” (“Worn” 310).

4.5.1 Valuing the Trace, or: In Pursuit of the Transitional Object

... what if the capacity to become a subject were something that could best be *learned* from an object? Not an idealized object but rather, say a smelly blanket with a frayed edge? (B. Johnson 95)

In a play where, as I have argued, the relation to and use of bodily accessories drives the action (and its bodies), it is only fitting that a ragged piece of dispensable cloth seems conducive to Posthumus' rather sudden and startling appreciation of human, or rather wifely, imperfection. In the following, I would like to follow up on Barbara Johnson's pertinent question in the epigraph to this chapter to weave a more modern object-related narrative into the fabric of my reading of *Cymbeline*. With her rather neat reference to a frayed and yes, smelly piece of cloth, Johnson is invoking Donald Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (1953). According to Winnicott, transitional objects are the first "not-me" possessions of the infant, such as the piece of blanket or bit of cloth that is held and/or sucked alongside the initial sucking of thumbs ("Transitional" 89). It is a phenomenon that is perhaps most famously embodied by Linus van Pelt, a character from Charles M. Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoons, who is inseparable from his blue security blanket. In his observations on the significance of this interplay between material and psychical reality, Winnicott focuses on "the use made of objects that are of part of the infant's body yet are not fully recognized as belonging to external reality" ("Transitional" 89). Winnicott maintains that the transitional object appears in the infant's possession when the infant begins to transition from a state of complete symbiosis with the mother to a "state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate" (*Playing* 20). According to Winnicott: "in this gradual disillusionment process, the stage is set for the frustrations that we gather under the word weaning" ("Transitional" 94). Existing in that "intermediate state between a baby's inability and growing ability to recognise and accept reality" (Winnicott, "Transitional" 90), the transitional object, as Barbara Johnson puts it, "cannot be understood in terms of a dichotomy between subject and object, since it helps bring that dichotomy into being" (98). Like Posthumus' bloody cloth – a material reminder that both conjures and obliterates Innogen "for I wish'd / Thou shouldst be colour'd thus" (5.1.1-2) – the transitional object acts both as a catalyst for the recognition of loss of omnipotent control and as a prosthetic pacifier to help tolerate the frustration that this recognition brings with it: the idea of a separate sense of self. In Posthumus' words: "I will begin, / The fashion less without, and more within" (5.1.32-33).

The developmental achievement in Winnicott's theory involves the "subject's perception of the object as an external phenomenon, not as a projective entity, in fact recognition of it as an entity in its own right" (*Playing* 120). It is essentially a progression from 'object-relation' to 'object-use,' a process Winnicott analyses in more detail in "The Use of an Object" (1969). In order for the subject to be able to use/recognise/love an object (and itself as subject), the subject must place the object outside its omnipotent control, something that requires the

destruction of the object. The central paradox here is that in the transitional phase the object is “in process of becoming destroyed because real, becoming real because destroyed (being destructible and expendable) (Winnicott, *Playing* 121). The object that needs to be destroyed here is the idealised object, what needs to survive or come into being through this destruction is the (corpo)real object, the (m)other, in all its imperfection.

At this point, the (new historicist) reader will throw her hands up in astonishment vis-a-vis such blatant subjection of an early modern play and its fictional characters to observations based on the psychoanalytic study of childhood in the twentieth-century.²⁴⁵ And yet, the explanatory lure of this object-centric psychoanalytical narrative for a play in which the characters’ identity is constituted by their relation to attachable/detachable parts (suits, moles, rings etc.) is undeniable: Posthumus Leonatus, as his name suggests and as I have argued in the preceding chapters, is initially conceived as a man without substance, a *neonatus* so to speak, whose posthumous sense of identity (and alleged omnipotence) is dependent on his relation with Innogen and the exclusivity of their bond (materialised by the idealised ring/bracelet). Once Posthumus is rudely awakened to the possibility that Innogen has a life/body independent to and autonomous of his own desires, he destroys what is essentially a projection of his own omnipotence/powerlessness (since Innogen survives). By doing so he is able to notice the ambivalence of the bloody cloth. It is this, his first real ‘not-me’ possession, which enables him – in a sense – to accept and tolerate the frustration of loss and allows him to re-negotiate (in a series of re-dressings) his relation to Innogen from good to ‘good-enough’ lover, that is, as someone who has an autonomous existence but belongs to a shared external reality and can therefore be loved:²⁴⁶ “You snatch some hence for little faults; / That’s love to have them fall no more” (5.1.13).

Winnicott’s central postulate that “destruction turns up and becomes a central feature in so far as the object is objectively perceived, has autonomy and belongs to a ‘shared’ reality” (*Playing* 121) thus offers a way of re-assessing the aggressive gestures that characterise the

²⁴⁵ Like Freud, Winnicott was not averse to ‘using’ Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to illustrate his ideas on the origins of creativity. Speculating on the specific cause for Hamlet’s dilemma about the foundation of being, he admits “Yes, inevitably I write as if writing of a person, not a stage character” and playfully concludes that Hamlet could not figure out the nature of his dilemma because he could not be there to see the Shakespeare *play* (in both senses of the word): “Shakespeare had the clue, but Hamlet could not go to Shakespeare’s play” (Winnicott, *Playing* 113).

²⁴⁶ Winnicott uses the term “good-enough ‘mother’” to denote a mother-figure capable of adapting to the infant’s needs, whose main task is providing the opportunity for disillusionment “according to the baby’s growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration” (“Transitional” 93). As Johnson has noticed, it is in this context that Winnicott finds himself quoting from a Shakespeare sonnet: “If the mother can play this part over a length of time without admitting impediment (so to speak)” she creates an “intermediate playground” (not unlike the theatre) where “the baby eventually “begins to enjoy experiences based on a ‘marriage’ of the omnipotence of intrapsychic processes with the baby’s control of the actual” (*Playing* 63).

recognition scenes in the plays under discussion. Critics have been puzzled as to why, in the decisive moment before recognition takes place, Pericles lashes out at Marina (in the guise of a healer), Posthumus strikes down Innogen (as Fidele) and, (in a less conspicuously violent gesture) Leontes tries to touch Hermione (as statue). As Winnicott maintains: “the first impulse in the subject’s relation to the object (objectively perceived, not subjective) is destructive” (*Playing* 121). It is an impulse that contributes to object constancy: “The object is always being destroyed. This destruction becomes the unconscious backcloth for the love of a real object; that is, an object outside the area of the subject’s omnipotent control” (*Playing* 126). In these negotiations, the survival of the object is just as important as its destruction, as it “places the object outside the area of objects set up by the subject’s projective mental mechanisms” (Winnicott, *Playing* 127). This paradox of ‘constructive destruction’ seems to be at the heart of the dynamic of the late romances, which invoke the spectre of tragedy only to move beyond it with a new restorative outlook in which wives/daughters/mothers survive destruction and reclaim the stage to be loved for their own sakes. In answer to Barbara Johnson’s introductory question to this chapter, this can only happen because the heroic subject develops a capacity to *use* the object, something that enables it to experience the reality of both the other and the self.²⁴⁷ As Winnicott concludes: “In these ways the object develops its own autonomy and life, and (if it survives), contributes to the subject, according to its own properties” (*Playing* 121).

To round up this psychoanalytic excursion into the world of transitional objects, I would like to propose the following ‘Winnicottian’ reading of the ‘recognitions’ in the final scene that lead up to the reunion between Posthumus and Innogen:

1. Iachimo confesses to his part in procuring ‘simular proof’ of Innogen’s ‘imperfection,’ something that triggered the initial process of disillusionment:

... I return’d with simular proof enough
 To make the noble Leonatus mad,
 By wounding his belief in her renown,
 With tokens thus, and thus.... (5.5.200-03)

2. Posthumus reveals his identity and defines it in relation to his destructive act:

I am Posthumus,
 That kill’d thy daughter (5.5.216-17)

²⁴⁷ Winnicott summarises the sequence of events that lead from object-relating to object-usage as follows: “(1) Subject *relates* to object. (2) Object is in process of being found instead of placed by the subject in the world. (3) Subject *destroys* object. (4) Object survives destruction. (5) Subject can *use* object” (*Playing* 126, emphasis in original).

3. Posthumus grieves for and re-invokes the idealised object of his fantasy:

... O Imogen!
My queen, my life, my wife, O Imogen,
Imogen, Imogen! (5.5.225-27)

4. Innogen, disguised as Roman page, calls out to Posthumus, who, unable to recognise her, responds with a destructive gesture:

Shall's have a play of this? Thou scornful page,
There lie thy part. [Striking her: she falls. (5.5.228-29)

5. Pisanio disabuses Posthumus of the notion that he had Innogen killed:

You ne'er kill'd Imogen till now. (5.5.231)

6. Innogen reflects on her status as (surviving) object, and instead of retaliating Posthumus' violent attack, embraces him, and invites him to repeat his rejection, with a difference, as in a game of "Fort-Da":²⁴⁸

Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?
Think that you are upon a rock, and now
Throw me again. [Embracing him. (5.5.261-63)²⁴⁹

7. Posthumus recognises Innogen and articulates their 'shared reality':

Hang there like fruit, my soul,
Till the tree die. (5.5.263-64)

As a final 'push' (before returning to more historically mooted matters), suffice it to say that Posthumus' s charged poetic response to the reunion, expressed in metaphors of symbiotic nourishment, seems to find a fertile pollinating echo in Winnicott's concluding statement on the use of the object: "in this way a world of shared reality is created which the subject can use and which can feed back other-than-me substance into the subject." (*Playing* 126-27).

But I anticipate: at the beginning of act five, having rejected all outward trappings of nobility ("I will fight against the part I come with" [5.1.24-25]) and armed with his humble cloth, we find Posthumus ready to embark on a voyage to uncover – to use a term from *Pericles* – the "inward man" (*Per.* 2.2.56) on the battlefield between the British and the Roman camps.

²⁴⁸ The Fort-Da (departure-return) game was given its name by Freud in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in which he describes observing his grandson repeatedly throwing away and retrieving a wooden reel (cf. 14-16). Whereas Freud interprets this game as a performative reaction to the distress caused by the separation from the mother, for Winnicott it ultimately illustrates the paradox of potentially constructive destructiveness.

²⁴⁹ In this context it is perhaps interesting to note that the term *object* contains the Latin root *ject* for *iacere*, "to throw" and that, according to the *OED*, it originally referred to "something placed before or presented to the eyes or other senses" ("Object").

It is a moral rather than a social quest for identity that eventually allies him with the other breed of ‘unaccommodated,’ or rather, original man that has been groomed in the alternative playground of this play: the noble savage. It is a quest for origins that in the final acts of the play takes us from bodies defined by their clothes (acting bodies) to bodies defined by their blood (action bodies). As in all of Shakespeare’s late romances, however, it soon becomes clear that such markers of difference are, like the bodies themselves, prone to confounding mutations.

4.5.2 Trunks without Their Tops, or: How to Undo Things with Things

In a vault beneath Westminster Abbey lies a mysterious figure, the effigy of a young man carved out of wood. It is slightly larger than life. The legs are beautifully formed but the torso lacks arms and the head is missing, like a doll that has been abused. It looks like an outsize puppet or fetish. (Kennedy, n. pag.)

Back in Cymbeline’s palace, things gather to a head when Cloten gets his hands on his rival’s suit, “the same suit he wore when he took leave of my lady” (3.5.126-28). His plan is simple: he will get hold of “the very garment of Posthumus,” the one which Innogen holds in “more respect than my noble and natural person” (3.5.136-37), and “With that suit on my back, will I ravish her” (3.5.138-39). Cloten’s adoption of Posthumus’ suit turns him into the play’s most literal-minded cross-dresser, in the sense that “to cross is not only to traverse, but to mix (as in to cross-breed) and to contradict (to cross someone)” (Dollimore 288). In the mirror scene that opens the fourth act, the linguistically challenged differentiation between the two suitors with which the play opened – “a thing / Too bad for bad report: and he that hath her” (1.1.16-17) – is given new substance when Cloten, speculating his newly clad *gestalt* in the mirror, finds much to admire: “How fit his garments / serve me!” (4.1.2-3). In what Orkin refers to as “unsettling moments of proximation and (re)incorporation, the bodies of Cloten and Posthumus are visibly superimposed on each other when Cloten re-views his reflection and makes a Posthumus of himself (94):

I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as his;
no less young, more strong, not beneath him in for-
tunes, beyond him in the advantage of the time,
above him in birth, alike conversant in general ser-
vices, and more remarkable in single oppositions;
yet this imperseverant thing loves him in my despite. (4.1.9-14)

Irrespective of the difference in looks, these characters are shown to be cut from the same cloth when it comes to exacting revenge on Innogen. Sharing one suit, it seems only adequate that their vengeful pur-suit is fated to end in a *cul-de-sac*, literally for one, symbolically for the other. In a line full of dramatic irony, Cloten, inhabiting the clothes of his other, predicts his own demise: “Posthumus, thy head (which is now growing upon thy shoulders) shall within this hour be off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to pieces before thy face” (4.1.15-17). As Judiana Lawrence observes: “Headless, and dressed in another’s clothes, Cloten’s ultimate fate is emblematic of his lack of identity, his ultimate achievement the inverse of what he had intended” (447). Decapitated, Cloten is identified as the hollow prop he has been all along, an “empty purse” (4.2.113) or, in a telling reference that metaphorically links him to another of Innogen’s would-be violators, a “trunk ... / Without his top” (4.2.353-54).

This meaningful upgrade of the material object, the dramatic power of dress to stand in for the implied body, is difficult to stage in a culture like ours where it is bodies that are “the latest, but also the last, dress ‘at our disposal’” (Colaiacomo 68). Theatrical productions of the play since the nineteenth century have thus tended to emphasise the physical likeness of the actors playing Cloten and Posthumus, mainly to rationalise Innogen’s disturbing (mis)recognition of the man she believes to know so well. Actress Helena Faucit, for example, who published her thoughts on some of Shakespeare’s heroines in a series of letters in 1885, was convinced that Cloten had to be: “handsome, well-proportioned, brainless ... I say well-proportioned; for how otherwise could Imogen have afterwards mistaken his headless body, as she does (Act iv, sc. 2), for that of Posthumus?” (175). Similarly, critic John Scott Colley, despite his historically informed analysis of the clothing imagery in this play, sees it as a given that Cloten “is as tall and well-proportioned as is Posthumus” (235). Occasionally, productions of *Cymbeline* even have had one actor perform both roles: in Cheek by Jowl’s 2007 production of the play for the Barbican in London, for example, Tom Hiddleston effected the switch between the two roles with the help of a pair of glasses and a change in bodily posture. Palatable as this may be to modern sensibilities, I would like to argue that one of the purposes of this mirror scene is to draw out likeness in the face of obvious difference. Frank Kermode pinpoints the crux of the matter when he states: “We are bound to wonder why the clothes of the incomparable Posthumus fit Cloten exactly” (268). The point I would like to make with my sartorial reading of the play is that they don’t. I will summon instead, once again, the bodily evidence presented by the actor for whom, as I have suggested earlier, Cloten’s role was originally intended. Robert Armin was renowned both for his skill in mime and mimicry as well as for his stunted physique. Bearing this in mind, the key to understanding this scene is visual: “What the audience sees with its eyes is a grotesque clown, older, thicker-limbed, *beneath* Posthumus in

height and *beyond* him in girth” (Wiles 154). The actor’s physical difference, therefore, is here used to intentionally rupture rather than suture the gap between the position of the wearer and the significance of his clothes, something that not only comically emphasises the extent of Cloten’s delusion, but also reiterates the semiotic (and social) crisis at the heart of theatrical representation: apparel often, but not always, proclaims the man.

In a true speculative sense the mirror scene in *Cymbeline* seems to affirm the notion that mimicry may produce the real. Lacan’s description of the mirror stage springs to mind, with the intriguing links it posits between the formation of the subject, the body and fantasy, between narcissism and aggression.²⁵⁰ As in Lacan’s description of this stage we, as spectators, here appear to witness “a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and lastly, to the assumption of an armour of an alienating identity” (5). As Lacan explains: “We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (2). Illuminating as these psychoanalytical speculations may be, on the early seventeenth century English stage, I would like to propose, Cloten’s shaping is less psychological than vestimentary. In a very pragmatic sense, as Lublin has pointed out, “The clothes of the period worked significantly to establish the shape of the wearer, not merely reflect it” (19). Instead of enhancing the body’s natural shape and supporting free movement, garments, as Aileen Ribeiro explains in her book on dress in the Stuart period, “had to be tight and taut” (42). Since garments were generally tailored according to “vague estimates of ‘smallnesse’ or ‘bignesse,’” clothes, once on the body, did not automatically fit well but required some extra adjustment (Ribeiro 5): “dress was of necessity pulled and pinned together by laces, pins and buttons until it assumed the shape of the wearer” (Ribeiro 5-6). Or, as in Cloten’s case, the wearer assumed the shape of the dress.

Even though it is unclear as to how far costuming practices in Shakespeare’s time reflect what was actually worn, references to clothes in Shakespeare’s plays identify them as contemporary. *Cymbeline*, for example, specifies a doublet, hat, hose, riding suit. A manuscript drawing by Henry Peacham from 1595 of a scene from *Titus Andronicus* is the only depiction of an Elizabethan performance of a Shakespeare play extant. While most of the characters depicted, wear what can roughly be identified as sixteenth-century dress, Titus wears an approximation to a Roman toga (cf. Lublin 86). There seems to be a general consensus

²⁵⁰ See Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001) 1-8.

amongst scholars that whatever period or country was depicted on the early modern English stage, costume was inevitably moderated by contemporary aesthetics, making it easy for the audience to identify character and action. In this way, as Lublin suggests, “theatres proved to be the one place where the sumptuary laws largely succeeded in determining the apparel that people wore” (43). Bearing this in mind, Posthumus’ suit would have consisted of a distinct ensemble of matching doublet, breeches and cloak. The doublet, typically a fitted and stiff upper garment with padded stomach, usually extended from the neck to below the waist. Breeches covered the top part of the legs and could either follow the shape of the leg (with extra rounding) or were heavily padded with *bombast*, a stuffing made of fabric, hair and flax, and fastened just above or below the knee.²⁵¹ Padded breeches and doublets were in fashion at court in the early seventeenth century but King James seemed to display a preference for heavy padding, a habit which, for Anthony Weldon, a court official, also signalled his timidity. According to Weldon King James was of “a middle stature, more corpulent through his cloathes then in his body, yet fat enough, his cloathes ever being made large and easie, the Doublets quilted for steletto prooffe, his Breeches in great pleites and full stuffed: Hee was naturally of a timorous disposition, which was the reason of his quilted Doublets” (qtd. in Ribeiro 23). Weldon’s observation that James was “In his Apparell so constant, as by his good wil he would never change his clothes untill worn out to very ragges,” not only confirms James’s notorious disinterest in his own garments, but also serves as a reminder that for most noblemen a suit was such an expensive investment that they would, in a probability, have worn them to rags, and certainly would not have owned many (qtd. in Ribeiro 23). This, in turn, suggests how one suit could easily become associated with a specific person. Marie Linthicum’s survey of *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (1936) suggests that “slops” or “wide or bagging breeches of knee length” were in fashion up until 1625 (209). This, in turn, indicates that the natural shape of the lower half of the body was really only fathomable through the nether stocks that were worn like tights, or the close-fitting riding boots that showed off the leg of the wearer. While all these vestimentary details may come across as somewhat tedious reconstructions of everyday practices, what I hope has become clear by now is that such material practices help illustrate not only how “in the Renaissance, clothes could be imagined as retaining the identity and form of the wearer” (Stallybrass and Jones 201), they also offer a pragmatic explanation to Innogen’s puzzling (mis)recognition of “the shape of’s leg: ... his hand: / His foot Mercurial: his Martial thigh” (4.2.309-11). What Innogen

²⁵¹ The details of contemporary dress are based on descriptions given by C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis E. Cunnington in their *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Faber, 1955) 47, and Robert I. Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern Theatre and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) 12.

recognises, in sum, is what she sees and has come to know intimately: “the garments of Posthumus” (4.2.308) that “ever hath but clipp’d his body” (2.3.133). While the vested conflation of Cloten and Posthumus in the play, therefore, gives visible expression to the notion that clothes do matter, it also homes in on the question with which this thesis opened: how do bodies make sense, or, to use Orkin’s more specific wording, “In what ways and on the basis of what are human (‘male’) bodies to be semanticised?” (95). After all, as Guiderius observes, “Thersites’ body is as good as Ajax,’ / When neither are alive” (4.2.252-53).

It is a question that is problematised with even greater insistency by the failed recognition scene that follows. The infamous incident of the ‘headless corpse,’ which leaves its gory mark on the play’s pastoral interlude, has troubled generations of critics. The *mise-en-scène* has Innogen waking up from her drug-induced sleep, only to find that she is lying outside, in the forest, next to a mutilated body, a body that – as only the audience knows – belongs to the recently decapitated Cloten. Trying to come to terms with the fact that what she is seeing is not the after-effect of a nightmare – “not imagin’d, [but] felt” (4.2.307) – she recognises Posthumus’ suit and thus falls heels over head (so to speak) for a “perceptual tra[p]” (Lewis 348). Just a few lines after uttering the aphoristic truism that “our eyes / Are sometimes like our judgements, blind” (4.2.301-02), a close reading of the corpse in front of her leads Innogen to mistakenly deduce that it belongs to Posthumus:

A headless man? The garments of Posthumus?
 I know the shape of’s leg: this is his hand:
 His foot Mercurial his Martial thigh:
 The brawns of Hercules (4.2. 308-11)

It is a blazon padded with romantic bombast, the inaccuracy of which is forcefully highlighted to the audience by Innogen’s conclusion that “To write and read / Be henceforth treacherous!” (4.2.316-17). Unable to follow her own call for hermeneutic suspicion, Innogen instead almost overzealously embellishes the (incomplete) ocular proof in front of her. It is a recognition process both similar and reverse to Leontes’ recognition of Hermione: in both cases, to borrow Bill Brown’s words, the “object assumes materiality ... not because of its familiar designated function but during a re-creation that renders it other than it was” (954). But whereas Leontes learns how to embrace vital imperfection, as it were, Innogen is bent on bodying forth the idolised whole. The play’s “conceptual habit,” which, as Palfrey has argued, thrives on metonymy, here reaches its most fetishistic extreme: “the concentration upon discrete or severed features is such that these members take on a life, a magnetism, of their own. Rather than simply signifying the cohering mass to which they belong, they announce their own separation” (97).

Neither a person nor a thing, Cloten's "arrogant piece of flesh" (4.2.127) evidently carries a unique charge on stage, confirming Belarius' uneasy premonition that "this body hath a tail / More perilous than the head" (4.2.143-44). In a dark twist to poetic justice Cloten's revenge appears to be 'post-humously' enacted: by holding "the very garment of Posthumus in more respect" than his "noble and natural person" (3.5.136, 137), Innogen mistakes the clothes and the itemisable body parts for the man, the 'puttock' for the 'eagle'.²⁵² In this sense, Innogen is indeed shown to be the "imperceiverant thing" (4.1.14) Cloten accuses her to be. Much like Posthumus, she is quick to see what she is convinced she knows.²⁵³ And yet it is this very knowledge, such as her professed familiarity with Posthumus' body, which, as Raphael Lyne has pointed out, is "an open and poignant question" (67).²⁵⁴ According to Posthumus, there has been no intimate contact between them: "Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained" (2.4.161).²⁵⁵ The play suggests that Posthumus and Innogen have married in what was called a "hand fast" (1.6.78) – a binding engagement – the validity of which, however, Cloten disputes: "The contract you pretend with that base wretch ... it is no contract, none" (2.3.112-14). Innogen's ready (mis)recognition of the body lying next to her, as I tried to suggest with my earlier excursion into matters of dress, is nevertheless not as preposterous as it may seem – it is, after all, based on the substantial evidence of a suit that carries "the print of his remembrance on't" (2.3.42). As material presences that bear the "trace and memory of its owner," clothes, as Stallybrass has illustrated, even if they happen to signify falsely, such as the

²⁵² At the beginning of the play Innogen justifies her choice of husband to her father by suggesting that with Posthumus "I chose an eagle / And did avoid a puttock" (1.2.70-71).

²⁵³ I am here citing a variant spelling of the Folio "imperseverant," introduced by editor Alexander Dyce in the nineteenth century to mean "Lacking in power to perceive, hence undiscerning" (Nosworthy 4.1n14). As editor of the Arden edition of the play, Nosworthy finds both "form and meaning ... suspect" and therefore "in the present state of knowledge" prefers to retain the Folio variant, which he translates to mean "stubborn, obstinate" (4.1n14). Both meanings, I find, apply to Innogen: she stubbornly insists on the truth of her perception.

²⁵⁴ In this context the 2002 feature film by German director Doris Dörrie entitled *Nackt* (Naked) provides a suggestive comment as it problematises this very notion of intimate knowledge or, in this case, literally, the concept of a naked truth in a contemporary context. The film's central scene revolves around an impromptu wager made at a dinner party. The bet is that the two couples present will not be able to recognise the naked body of their respective partner while blindfolded, using only their hands, something they are convinced they can do easily, and which inevitably turns out to be a (comic) misconception. What this suggests is that even if there are no tell-tale clothes to (mis)guide us, the naked body is as unreliable a source for 'truth' as clothes, as it just offers up yet another a vested sign that requires reading.

²⁵⁵ In his demographic study on *Courtship, Illegitimacy, and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996), Richard Adair suggests that "the various terms denoting a binding engagement – contracting, handfasting, troth plighting, and so on – covered an enormous variety of situations in late medieval and early modern England, ranging from a very formal ritual before witnesses in public, virtually amounting to a marriage ceremony in itself, down through all shades of informality to a vague, half articulated assumption between a courting couple that a marriage would take place between them at some unspecified future point" (144). As Adair wryly concludes, "The potential for confusion was immense," something which may explain why Cloten feels he has room to maneuver (144).

bloody cloth or the wandering suit, essentially “*encode* other material and immaterial presences” (“Worn” 310, 312).

This investiture in objects is – in a curious twist of history – powerfully illustrated by the headless prop that also presides over this chapter in form of an epigraph. It refers to a wooden torso with jointed legs, the remains of the funeral effigy of Henry Stuart, King James I’s eldest son, which formed the centrepiece of the “Lost Prince” exhibition on display at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2012/2013. Once complete with a wax portrait head modelled from life, the mannequin was commissioned when Henry died of typhoid at the age of eighteen in December 1612, a year after Simon Forman saw a performance of *Cymbeline* at the Globe. Laid on top of the hearse which contained the actual corpse, this “representation” of the much loved soldier-prince, according to the description given by the Prince’s Treasurer, Charles Cornwallis, was “decked and trimmed with cloathes, as he went when he was alive, Robes, Collar, Crowne, Golden Rodde in his Hand, &c.” (471).²⁵⁶ Just as in *Cymbeline*, clothes and bodily accessories are here staged “not as a guise which can be shifted without a trace, but as memory, the living embodiment of a dead past (Stallybrass, “Worn” 310). Contemporary accounts concur that the effigy was so lifelike that it had an intense emotional impact on the onlookers, who had turned out in thousands to witness the four-hour procession of the hearse to Westminster Abbey. In a letter to Lady Carelton, Isaac Wake, secretary to ambassador Dudley Carleton, reports:

... the goodly image of that lovely prince clothed with the richest garments he had, ... did so liuely represent his person, as that it did not only draw teares from the severest beholder, but caused a fearefull outcry among the people as if they felt at the present their owne ruine in that loss. I must confess never to have seen such a sight of mortification in my life, nor neuer so iust a sorrowe so well expressed as in all the spectators whose streaming eyes made known howe much inwardly their harts did bleed (qtd. in Strong 7)

As Maev Kennedy remarks in her review of the exhibition for the *Guardian*, little of this artwork has survived: “The wonderful clothes were stolen within a few years, the head was gone by the early 19th century, and the arms, probably originally sacking stuffed with straw, have long since rotted away” (n. pag.). For the curator of the exhibition, these battered remains represent “a very poignant, a tremendously moving symbol of the decline into which his memory has fallen” (qtd. in Kennedy, n. pag.). The survival of this particular headless torso

²⁵⁶ William Hole's engraving of the funeral hearse (1612), on display at the British Museum, captures in detail what Cornwallis describes in his account: “his Cap and Crowne upon his Head, his Garter, Collar, with a *George* about his Neck, his golden Staffe in his Right Hand lying cross a little; briefly, every Thing as he was apparelled at the Time of his Creation; which being done, it was laid on the Back on the Coffin, and fast bound to the same” (469).

together with the contemporary description of Henry's funeral procession serve as a salutary reminder not only of how material things – mannequins, clothes, a crown, a rod – constitute the subject, but also how the object as subject affects other subjects. The grief Innogen experiences is as moving as it is mistaken – it is 'real,' even if the body she is mourning for is a surrogate. It appears that in this sense, at least, the play confirms Belarius' conviction that "though mean and mighty, rotting / Together, have one dust, yet reverence ... doth make distinction" (4.2.246-48).

For Michael Taylor, Innogen's experience of grief *vis-à-vis* Posthumus' meanest substitute presents the culmination of a "pattern of erotic punishment in which both lovers suffer for the naïvety of their expectations," a suitable climax, he finds, to the play's "pastoral activity, in which an original dream of innocence ... undergoes such a savage assault" (105, 98). Based on a material misreading, we witness the princess turned pastoral "cave-keeper" (4.2.298) hit the rocky bottom of her fairy-tale take on the world: "I am nothing; or if not, / nothing to be were better (4.2.367-68). It is a violent confrontation with a nightmarish reality in which Innogen lays bare and recites all the parts which have given her life meaning, the loss of which results in a "literal and symbolic besmirching" (Taylor 99). As Nosworthy remarks with some horror: "There seems to be no escape from the gruesome conclusion that she smears her face with his blood, or is about to do so" (4.2n333). It is a gesture diametrically opposite to a notion of pastoral bliss and more in tune with the savage violence that characterises tragedies such as *Coriolanus* or *Titus Andronicus*. Even though Innogen's misreading is not dissimilar to the interpretative fallacies that take Pericles and Leontes temporarily out of play-action, Innogen, unlike her male counterparts, seems to be more 'sinned against than sinning.' In contrast to *Pericles*, moreover, where Pericles' grief over Marina's death is deferred to a dumb show, and to *The Winter's Tale*, where Leontes' reaction to Hermione's alleged death is given short shrift by Paulina's corrective presence, *Cymbeline* offers no dramatic intermediary for the presentation of its tragic climax: the audience is exposed to Innogen's harrowing experience of grief as it unfolds in real time. This somewhat macabre "pastoral reckoning," which has unsettled critics and theatregoers alike, certainly appears to be pushing the tragicomic mingling of the terrible and grotesque to its affective extreme (Taylor 104). While Warren in his introduction to the play diagnoses this headless 'incident' as ultimately sourceless (*Cymbeline* 1n1), and Nosworthy equally finds that "after all Shakespeare may have been capable of a little original invention" (xxxiv), Tanya Pollard more recently has made a strong case for its generic affiliation with Greek romance, especially Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* (c. third century AD).²⁵⁷ Translated into

²⁵⁷ See Tanya Pollard's essay on "Romancing the Greeks: *Cymbeline's* Genres and Models," in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell,

English by Thomas Underdown in 1569, the *Aethiopica* was reprinted four times by 1606. Featuring eloping lovers, lost heirs, unfortunate adventures, false deaths, a vindication of chastity, separation and reunion, war and peace, its popularity was such that Gosson in 1582 complained about the extent to which “the Aethiopian historie ... haue beene throughly ransackt, to furnish the Playe houses in London” (*Plays*, sig. D5v). Apart from obvious debts at the level of theme and structure, Pollard finds that the device of false death is used to similar effect: “each counterbalances emotional intensity with a wry ironic detachment” (39). Pollard concludes that by “bringing an alternative literary and generic tradition, Greek romance, to the model of Italian tragicomedy,” Shakespeare is “simultaneously offering the crowd-pleasing melodrama of romance for his popular audiences and a tongue-in-cheek mockery for his more sophisticated viewers” (Pollard 9). Whereas the corpse scene in the *Aethiopica*, however, “shamelessly exploits its emotional drama of terror and euphoria for melodramatic effect,” rapidly switching from lamentation to rejoicing (and back again), Shakespeare keeps his heroine ignorant of the mistake she has made and instead, in Pollard’s view “escalates this juxtaposition of irony and emotional intensity” (40, 41). In the end, the scene’s effect will inevitably depend on how it is staged, and, according to Guarini’s dramatic aesthetics at least, whether it is attuned to the humoural constitution of its audience. Either way, as Pollard notes, “there is no erasing either the intensity or the ludicrousness of Imogen’s grief” (42). In *Cymbeline*, the emotional roller-coaster which has been triggered by a particularly bloody materialisation of ‘simulacra of terror’ which – as I have argued earlier – affectively and effectively shape Shakespeare’s particular blend of tragicomedy – is eventually somewhat unsatisfyingly tempered by the arrival of the Roman cavalry. Under Lucius’s ‘civilised’ Roman gaze, Cloten’s decapitated body is deprived of its affective sting: the pagan object of devotion is translated into a “trunk ... / Without his top” (4.2.353-54). The meaning of the object is here shown to depend not on some inherent sacredness but on variable contexts and interpretations: “What’s thy interest / In this sad wreck? How came’t? Who is’t?” (4.2.366-67). Deprived, once again, of the object that holds her affection, Innogen, finding herself reduced to being “nothing; or if not, / Nothing to be were better” (4.3.367-68), is offered a new lease of life as Fidele, (masculine) loyalty and faith personified. The audience, along with Innogen, is asked to keep their cheer since “Some falls are means the happier to arise” (4.2.403). Without further ado, the ‘sad wreck’ that remains is buried away from sight.

Back at Cymbeline’s court, another romantic wrapper is invoked by the only benevolent double-agent of the play: finding that he is no longer in control of the rapidly unravelling plot,

2008) 34-53. For a book-length study on Shakespeare’s use of Greek romance see Carol Gesner, *Shakespeare and Greek Romance: A Study of Origins*, (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2014).

Pisanio reassures himself (and the audience) that “Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer’d” (4.4.46). Meanwhile, Cymbeline, faced with the threat of a Roman invasion, finds himself “Perplex’d in all” (4.3.41) as to why he should be deprived of the comfort and counsel of all his family members at this crucial point in time: “heavens, / How deeply you at once do touch me” (4.3.3-4). Over in the Welsh mountains, the princes in hiding find that they can no longer endure being locked away from “action and adventure” (4.4.3). A weary Belarius decides it may be time to let them out of the pastoral closet. ‘True blood’ is consequently unleashed into the battle for Britain via a heroic couplet which, as Nosworthy suggests in an editorial aside, “was positively boomed at the audience” (4.4n53-54):

Lead, lead. The time seems long, their blood thinks scorn
Till it fly out and show them princes born. (4.4.53-54)

From here onwards, as Taylor has noted, “malicious energy in the play flags” (98), and, as in the second half of *The Winter’s Tale*, the audience finds that with almost “Every wink of the eye, some new grace will / be born” (*WT* 5.2.110-11).

4.6 The Sparks of Nature, or: Blood Will Tell

Thus romance generally involves aristocratic protagonists, or ones who are miraculously revealed as such after living a lower-class existence, in a kind of ‘blood will tell’ move in which social status is ultimately disclosed. (Fuchs 7)

Having been raised by their abductor, the banished Lord Belarius, in a cave in the Welsh mountains – a “cell of ignorance” (3.3.33) untainted by “the art of the court” (3.3.46) – Cymbeline’s natural sons, savage in manner but gentle of heart, affirm (in Belarius’s eyes) the credo of innate worth: a nobility that is conferred by “princely blood” rather than royal robes (3.3.93). Within the realms of this pastoral retreat or, to use Nevo’s apt phrase – within this “Belarius family romance” (*Shakespeare’s* 85) – valour is determined by biological prowess rather than by costly ‘habits’. It is an ecological niche that sustains none but manly mountaineers, able-bodied survivors whose “body’s mark’d / With Roman swords” (3.3.56-57) and who live “bare to weather” (3.3.64), learning “In simple and low things to prince it” (3.3.85). Set apart from the polluting influence of “city’s usuries” (3.3.45), where one will only find effeminate courtiers “doing nothing for a Robe . . . rustling in unpaid-for silk” (3.3.23-24), humanity in the untamed western lands is back to basics, the “originall manner of mankind,” as

Montaigne envisions in his essay “On the Use of Apparell” (1603),²⁵⁸ “where nothing that is counterfet can be admitted” (1: 224). It is an environment where clothes lose their signifying potential and “Knighthoods and honours ... are titles but of scorn” (5.3.6). In the pastoral cavities of ancient Wales, in other words, it is the ‘stuff within’ that matters.

A popular topic in the developing political ideology of the early modern gentry, the literary trope of the country came to stand for “traditional virtues, laws and government” and was pitted against an “aggressive and unscrupulous Court” and the “artifice, novelty, dissimulation and extravagance of the courtier” (Heal and Holmes 202). According to Heal and Holmes, the court versus country dialectic had a particular pertinence at the time of James’s reign when the court was increasingly criticised for being “the centre of not just opulence, of vice, of sycophany and of self-seeking, but of schemes deeply destructive of English law, government and religion” (202). But as the temporal displacement of the specific locale suggests, in *Cymbeline* these tropes run deeper, evoking the topical “implications of a space that had, in the context of 1610 especially, come to represent both the site of ancient British past and the future British heir” (Cull 138).²⁵⁹ Credited as the alleged birthplace of Britain’s mythical progenitor Arthur and as the enduring heartland of ancient Britons in the early modern cultural imagination, Wales, as Palfrey has noted, is set up as an environment capable of legitimating inaugurations (cf. 126, 137). It is a conspicuous intrusion, made even more so by the insistent naming of Milford Haven, the Welsh seaport and “blessed” (3.2.60) symbol of Tudor/Stuart ascendancy towards which all action in the play gravitates.²⁶⁰ And yet these anachronistic confections, I would like to suggest, represent mere vestiges of topical significance, a “scrap of hemline-history,” so to speak, in a play that has a fully vested interest in the matter of Britain (Vincent 13). After all, as R. A. Foakes notes, “*Cymbeline* is the only play in which the term ‘Briton’ occurs, seventeen times (in addition to ‘Britain,’ twenty-seven, and British, two)” (221). Ever since Emrys Jones reclaimed *Cymbeline* from the ahistorical ‘clutches’ of New Criticism in 1961, there has been a growing body of scholarship investigating, to use Lisa Hopkins’s apt phrase, *Cymbeline*’s “complex and potentially explosive” investiture in history (153).²⁶¹ In

²⁵⁸ The publication date here refers to the date of the English translation of Montaigne’s full edition of the *Essays* by John Florio in 1603. Book One, which contains “The Use of Apparel,” was originally published in France in 1580.

²⁵⁹ As Marisa Cull notes, Shakespeare’s ‘Wales’ in *Cymbeline* is actually an anachronism: “no such separate entity existed in the context of Roman Britain” (138).

²⁶⁰ I have counted fifteen references in this play – *Richard III*, the only other Shakespeare play that mentions Milford, only refers to it once. For the topical symbolic significance of Milford Haven see also Emrys Jones, “Stuart *Cymbeline*,” *Essays in Criticism* 11.1 (1961) 93-95.

²⁶¹ See, for example Leah S. Marcus’ “Cymbeline and the Unease of Topicality,” in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan (London: Longman, 1999) 134-68; Ros King, “*Cymbeline*”: *Constructions of Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Maris R. Cull, “Contextualising 1610: *Cymbeline*, *The Valiant*

concurrency with this stance, I would like to argue that the different princely bodies which are pitted against each other, are mistaken for each other and ultimately conflated in this play, are both fashioned by and fashion the political context in which they were first staged. With their investment in a “sacred geography” that condenses various fictional and factual references to the birth of a British nation with overtones of mystic nativity (Clark 247),²⁶² the Welsh pastoral scenes of the play especially seem to partake in what Jodi Mikalachki has described as an early modern project to recover national origins, an ‘issue’ which was also at the heart of King James I’s dynastic ideology (cf. 301).²⁶³ Performed in the immediate aftermath of a major dynastic event – the investiture of Prince Henry Stuart with the principality of Wales on 8 June 1610 – the conjunction of ancient Britain, Wales and royal blood in *Cymbeline* is certainly a potent one. For the first time the Scottish and English titles held by heirs-apparent to the two thrones were united in one Prince, an emergent imperial dynasty already prefigured in the ‘making’ of his progenitor, James VI and I: “that Vnion of two ancient and famous Kingdoms ... which is made in my blood” (James I, *King* 134-135). In the following I would like to re-visit this topical scrap, the local moment of the investiture of a future King, and examine how a renewed interest in the ancient past and its relation to a Jacobean present helps shape the conception of the multiple princely bodies that are paraded and pitted off against each other as legitimate candidates for succession in *Cymbeline*.

In his inaugural speech to the English Parliament, James had made a point of reminding his English and Scottish subjects that it was by “Birthright and lineall descent” that he had become the “vndoubted and lawful King and Gouvernour” of multiple kingdoms (*King* 132, 133).²⁶⁴ As Smuts has shown, James’s ideas about heritable kingship became acceptable after 1603 “not because they seemed irrefutable but because they became convenient, once it was clear that the hereditary heir also stood the best chance of assuring a smooth succession and continuity in the religious settlement” (273). Unlike Elizabeth, James came equipped with a royal family, something that, according to Smuts, “encouraged a tendency ... to magnify the importance of the royal blood and its transmission as a mystical source of legitimacy and civic peace” (273).

Welshman, and *The Princes of Wales*,” *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly*, ed. Willy Maley and Philip Schwyzer (London, Routledge, 2016) 127-42.

²⁶² The historical Cunobelinus (Roman historians) or Kymbeline (Holinshed) ruled Britain at the time of the birth of Christ. According to Holinshed, Kymbeline’s only claim to fame seems to be based on this timely connection: “Little other mention is made of his doing, except that during his reigne, the saviour of the world our Lord Jesus Christ the onelie sonne of God was Borne of a virgine, about the 23 year reigne of this Kymbeline (qtd. in Bullough 8:43).

²⁶³ See Jodi Mikalachki, “The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46.3 (1995) 301–22.

²⁶⁴ King James assumed the title of King of Great Britain in his “Proclamation concerning the Kings Majesties Stile, of King of Great Britaine, &c” (20 October 1604), in which James declares that he did “assume to Our selfe by the cleerenesse of our Right, The Name and Stile of KING OF GREAT BRITTAINE, FRANCE, AND IRELAND, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, &c.” (James, *Stuart* 97).

According to James's bio-logic, with the "descent lineally out of the loynes of Henry the seuenth," the "first Vniter" of the warring Houses of Lancaster and York, "reunited and confirmed in me" genetically, so to speak, he is in the unique position to fulfil the ancient Arthurian prophecy: to re-institute British union (*King* 134). It was an indefeasible hereditary right, as poets and panegyrists at the time were happy to confirm, anagrammatically encapsulated in his very name: 'Charles Iames Steuart / Claims Arthur's Seat'.²⁶⁵

For James, the project of union was a peaceful if not pastoral one concerned with "restoration, a re-unification of nations that had once been, simply, Britain" (Cull 128): "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body; I am the Shepherd, and it is my flocke" (James, *King* 136). To imagine otherwise, he suggests, would be unnatural if not "monstrous": "For ... was not both the Kingdoms Monarchies from the beginning, and consequently could euer the Body bee counted without the Head, which was euer vnseparably ioyned thereunto?" (James, *King* 136). In the province of Shakespeare's late romance it certainly could, as the pastoral crisis in *Cymbeline* demonstrates. Genealogy may be destiny, but James' narrative of origins draws its historical credibility and its "significant Prefiguration" from the same founding myths that animate Shakespeare's play (James, *Stuart* 97).²⁶⁶ In a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare's late romances, James's rhetoric is marked (or marred) by this special capability of romance narratives, their "organic or seemingly viral tendency to develop and mutate into unanticipated ends" (A. King 171-72).²⁶⁷

Even though the English parliament rejected a legal union with Scotland in 1607, James continued his efforts, propagating the security of succession through the "healthful and hopefull Issue of my body" (*King* 137). James's oldest son and 'natural successor,' Henry Frederick, was the focus of particular hope and expectation. In marked contrast to his father, who liked to project for himself the image of peacemaker, Henry was deeply invested in presenting himself as a gentleman warrior, a "paragon of martial strength" (Cull 128).²⁶⁸ Here is how playwright and historian Arthur Wilson records the event of the investiture in his *History of Great Britain, Beginning with the Life and Reign of King James I* (1653):

²⁶⁵ This popular anagram is referred to in Ben Jonson's "Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers" (1610), written to accompany the indoor tournament held to celebrate the investiture of Henry as Prince of Wales (143, line 21).

²⁶⁶ Quotations from King James's royal proclamations follow *Stuart Royal Proclamations Vol. 1: Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625*, ed. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), unless indicated otherwise.

²⁶⁷ Andrew King here refers to Cooper's definition of romantic motifs as 'memes' behaving "like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms of culture" (Cooper 3).

²⁶⁸ The King's motto was, in fact, *Beati Pacifici* ("blessed are the peacemakers") (E. Jones 90).

Prince Henrie, the prime branch of this *Royal Cedar*, now growing Manlie (being the sixteenth year of his *Age*) put forth himself in a more *Heroick* manner than was usuall with *Princes* of his Time, by Tiltings, Barriers, and other exercises on horsback ... which caught the peoples *eyes*, and made their *tongues* the Messengers of the hearts, in daily extolling his hopeful and gallant towardliness to admiration. And now the King thought him full of ripeness for the *Honor of Knighthood* ... and ... created him Prince of *Wales* with all the *pomp* and *solemnitie* that a King could express towards his hopefull Son, his first born; or the *merit* of a Prince (that floated in the peoples affections) could possibly attain to. (52)

Henry's public debut as Prince of Wales was inaugurated with an indoor martial tournament referred to as Barriers, which was held at court in January 1610. In the guise of Meliadus – reputedly an anagram of 'Miles A Deo,' Soldier of God – Henry, together with six companions, took on fifty-six opponents with pikes and swords (cf. MacLeod 108). According to Henry's Treasurer and later biographer, Charles Cornwallis, the prince "did admirably fight for his part ... which is scarce credible in so young yeares, enough to assure the world, that Great Britaine's brave Henry aspired to immortality" (qtd. in Wilks 197). The masque accompanying the Barriers, a "chivalric revival ... looking towards civic responsibility and the defence of the British emporium" was written by Ben Jonson with sets designed by Inigo Jones (Marshall 123). Jonson's "Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers" invoke King Arthur as ancestor of a new heroic successor, princely Meliadus, who has come to revive the days of ancient British glory and to restore the nation's fortunes through chivalrous deeds. As Cull has pointed out, even though the symbolism of the Barriers was particularly suited to cater to the prince's "brand of heroism ...: that of the ancient Britons," unmitigated endorsement of ancient concepts of heroic valour would have been problematic in the context of the investiture (128). In James's court, after all, "mediation trumped militarism" (Cull 130). Jonson's "Speeches" gesture towards this tension but also point to a possible reconciliation, staged as a progression from a martial mythical past to a civic and de-romanticised present:

These were bold stories of our Arthur's age;
 But here are other acts; another stage
 it is not since as then:
 No giants, dwarfs, or monsters here,
 His arts must be to govern and give
 To peace no less than arms. (149, lines 163-68)

It is a shift between myth and history that is connected to a wider shift in the early seventeenth-century historiography of the ancient past, of the quest for and re-fashioning of legendary national bodies, the "valiant race" (5.4. 83), whose origins, just like Posthumus' ancestry, lacking empirical proof, invited all kinds of posthumous (re)constructions. This renewed interest in what it might mean to be 'British' found its way into popular culture via a

series of plays about Roman Britain, performed in roughly the same period as *Cymbeline*.²⁶⁹ As John E. Curran has argued, *Cymbeline* in particular “enacts a complex response to the English revolution in historiography wherein the truth of the primitive condition of the ancient Britons was discovered and the traditional British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth was discredited”(277).²⁷⁰ While it is impossible to do justice to the complexity with which Shakespeare engages with the ‘Matter of Britain’ within the scope of this study, a brief overview of the different positions should suffice to map the contesting conceptions of ‘valiant’ bodies in this play which, as the name of its titular ruler suggests, is after all driven by a quest for (absent) originary matters.

4.6.1 The Matter of Britain, or: Why Shakespeare’s Bodies Go Historical

Howsoe’er ‘tis strange,
Or that the negligence may well be laugh’d at,
Yet is it true, sir. (*Cym.* 1.1.65-67)

Arguably the most pervasive foundation myth of the British nation is derived from Geoffrey Monmouth’s enormously popular twelfth-century chronicle *Historia regum Britanniae* (‘History of the Kings of Britain’). In an account more “Poeticall than historical” (Camden 7), Monmouth or Galfridus Arturus, as he was also known, traces the name of the British Isles and its first inhabitants back to Brutus, descendant of the legendary Aeneas, whose wayward journey leads him from Troy to the island of Albion, subsequently re-named Brutayne (cf. Parry 155-56). Monmouth’s original British settlers, as Graham Parry has noted, are no primitives. Unlike the aboriginal giants, which were made extinct by the new settlers’ arrival, Monmouth’s Britons are portrayed as a civilised nation “living in a flourishing urban society,” much like their subsequent Roman aggressors (Parry 157). This “glorious aura of antiquity” that characterises Monmouth’s work, together with its angelic prophecies and a lineage of heroic kings that reached its apotheosis in King Arthur, happily furnished the works of countless poets and dramatists (Parry 157); it also melded into documented accounts of

²⁶⁹ Examples include John Fletcher’s *Bonduca* (c. 1613), *Caradoc or a Valiant Welshman* (1615) attributed to Robert Armin, and William Rowley’s *A Shoemaker, a Gentleman* (c. 1618).

²⁷⁰ For an overview of the development of historiography in the early modern period see Paulina Kewes, ed., *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), esp. Daniel Woolf’s essay “From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500-1700,” 31-68. For an account of the competing versions of ancient British history current at the turn of the seventeenth century, see Graham Parry’s “Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts,” in *Neo-historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics*, ed. Robin H. Wells, Glenn Burgess, and Rowland Wymer (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000) 153-78.

English history well into the sixteenth century. Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (first published 1577), Shakespeare's main go-to source for national pasts, is a case in point.²⁷¹ The longevity of Monmouth's British myth in the early modern cultural imagination is explained by one of its most influential sixteenth-century detractors. William Camden, humanist scholar and author of *Britannia* (1586, translated into English in 1610), saw it as his pioneering task to "restore antiquity to Britaine, and Britain to his antiquity" by drawing together available primary historical evidence of the British at the time of Roman invasion in order to "enlighten obscuritie, cleare doubts, and recall home Veritie by way of recovery" (qtd. in Camden's preface to *Britannia*, n. pag.).²⁷² Faced with the lack of native accounts – "For the first inhabitours ... had other cares and thoughts to busie and trouble their heads, than to deliver their beginnings unto posteritie" – Camden openly admits to the difficulty of steering clear of conjecture, "considering that the trueth, after so many revolutions of ages and times, could not chuse but be deeply hidden" (4). Whereas earlier chroniclers, in Camden's words, "laboured to bring fourth narrations ... to give contentment" (4), Camden's empirical approach, as Laura Ashe notes, plugs "inevitable gaps in the record not with myth, but with ignorance" (153), paving the way for a more enlightened treatment of historical documentation.²⁷³ Finding Monmouth's *Historia* on the whole to be a fabrication "patched up of untuneable discords and jarring absurdities," Camden proceeds to debunk Brutus and his lineage as "counterfeit Progenitor" wholly of Monmouth's invention (8, 7). Camden's discovery of the primitive condition of ancient Britain, however, is tinged with his own brand of patriotic gloss. Embellished with his authorial comments, the sources Camden does cite create an image of a "sturdy, warlike nation ... barbarous in its dwellings and habits, but quick and spirited in action" who heroically stand up to the might of Rome (Parry 155): "*let this suffice the Britans for the beginning of their Nobilitie, that they be courageous and valiant in fight, that they subdue their enemies on every side, and that they utterly refuse the yoke of servitude*" (Abbot of S. Albans, qtd. in Camden 8). Camden's Britons may not be civilised – "They knowe no use at all of garment" (30) – but they are endowed with "martiall proesse" (22), something that qualifies them as

²⁷¹ For a concise account of how Holinshed incorporates mythical British history in his *Chronicles*, see Laura Ashe "Holinshed and Mythical History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Heal, Felicity, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013) 153-70.

²⁷² Camden, as he points out himself, was not the first to question the authenticity of Monmouth's account. Polydore Vergil, the sixteenth-century Italian humanist whom Henry VII commissioned to write a new history of England, is usually credited with being Monmouth's first serious critic. In this context it is interesting to note that in the last scene of *Cymbeline*, Polydore is revealed to be Guiderius' true name (cf. 5.5.358-59).

²⁷³ Compare Holinshed's approach in tackling such hurdles: "But omitting this point as needles to be controversed, & letting all dissonant opinions of writers passe, as a matter of no such moment that we should need to sticke therein as in a glewspot, we wil proceed in the residue of such collections as we find necessarilie pertinent to the continuation of this historie" (qtd. in Ashe 169).

worthy progenitors of a nation “whose bodies are of an excellent good constitution ... whose manhood ... is famously renowned throw the world” (4): “*For it is manhood only, that ennobleth a nation, the minde it is also, with perfect understanding, and nothing els, that gaineth gentilitie to a man*” (Abbot of St. Albans qtd. in Camden 7). In spite of his commitment to historical veracity, Camden eventually concedes to the ideological value of myth in building the idea of a nation:

Let Antiquitie heerein be pardoned, if by entermingling falsities and truthes, humane matters and divine together, it make the first beginnings of nations and cities more noble, sacred, and of greater maiestie: seeing that, as Plinie writeth, *Even falsely to claime and challenge descents from famous personages, implieth in some sort a love of virtue.* (8-9)

This was a truth universally acknowledged by the ruling monarchs during Camden’s lifetime, who continued to make use of myth for political and propaganda purposes, opportunistically linking a classical ‘British’ past to the (Anglo-Scottish) present, grafting Stuart onto Tudor.²⁷⁴ As Frances Yates explains: “The emphasis on legendary continuity of the new dynasty with the former reigning house helped to facilitate, emotionally, the transfer of loyalties” (26).

Marked by a “drive, on the one hand, to establish historical precedent and continuity and, on the other, to exorcise a primitive savagery it wished to declare obsolete,” Curran maintains that this “Renaissance anxiety about native origins” derived from the “absence of a native classical past on which to found the glories of the modern nation” (302). It is an absence that, once recognised as such, created space for new narratives, be they historical, poetical, or political. As *Cymbeline* demonstrates, ancient Britons in various shapes and guises “could be invoked to lend authority to many causes” (Parry 155). Shakespeare’s cause, as criticism of the play continues to manifest, appears to be as flexible as his interpreters. Playing “fast and loose with the history he found in the *Chronicles*,” Shakespeare fashions his own idiosyncratic contribution to the discourse on national origins (Dutton 538).²⁷⁵ The heroic mythology of an ancient past is explored at the fringes of the play, at the periphery of the Roman Empire. *Cymbeline*’s Wales, the heartland of British myth, presents us with the surviving vestiges of ancient Britishness, one which is more in tune with Camden’s primitive society than with Monmouth’s Trojan one. At a remove from any civilising process, Belarius’ cave is staged as the last enclave of ‘manhood’ in a play in which, so far, the male exemplars of British nobility have not been doing so well. But just as Belarius’ s vision of primeval bliss is questioned by his

²⁷⁴ Camden dedicated the 1600 edition of his *Britannia* to Queen Elizabeth and the 1607 expanded edition to James I.

²⁷⁵ According to Richard Dutton, *Cymbeline* qualifies as chronicle history, a romance that “must be seen in the specific context of its integration with historical record,” even as it ignores or redirects its historical narrative (cf. 530). See also his essay on “Shakespeare and British History” in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles*, ed. Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013) 527-42.

flock (aptly endowed with the pseudonyms Polydore and Cadwal), the ambivalence at the heart of the British dynasty is registered when savage youths with “royalty unlearn’d, honour untaught” (4.2.178) are posited against their courtly contenders:²⁷⁶ one, a shifter of suits, who embodies noble blood without breeding (Cloten), the other a turncoat of uncertain origins, who nevertheless is instrumental in deflecting the threat of a Roman invasion (Posthumus).

4.7 “Simular proof,” or: Gathering the Props

Cymbeline is an unruly play, magical in parts, which ends as if in a human lost-property office. (Kellaway D13)

I stand on fire.
Come to the matter.
(*Cym.* 5.5.168)

That contemporary audiences would get their “generic cake and eat it, too” (Pollard 39), becomes obvious when the play serves up a final act which is crammed with declarations of contrition (Iachimo and Posthumus), heroic battle action (Belarius and his princely charges), and spectacular divine intervention (Jupiter cum ghosts), after which, with “fierce abridgment” (5.5.383), the play is propelled to a comic resolution. Layer by layer, erratic trappings are stripped away and, together with the born-again Posthumus, the play’s characters are caught in the play’s overall drive to “fashion less without, and more within” (5.1.33). Having been defeated by what he believes to be “A very drudge of Nature’s” (5.3.5) – Posthumus disguised as British peasant – Iachimo, for instance, finds that “Knighthoods and honours, borne / As I wear mine, are titles but of scorn” (5.3.6-7). Cloten, equally guilty of wearing borrowed robes, finds himself ‘unmade’ by his clothes. By drawing attention to his costume – “Know’st me not by my clothes?” (4.2.81) – Cloten, in the ancient heartland of Britain, merely highlights his inability, both figuratively and literally, to fill his station with imperial bearing.²⁷⁷ He is, in other words, identified as ‘counterfeit presence,’ a “dissolute Gentlemen, which like proude persons

²⁷⁶ As critics such as Dutton and Curran have noted, most the characters’ names in *Cymbeline* can be matched up with historical persons who feature in Holinshed. Though any attempt to find a pattern for this, as Dutton remarks, inevitably becomes an “exercise of frustration” (539). Curran does, however, manage to make a convincing case for the possible significance of choosing Polydore and Cadwal, “names denoting the fall of Galfridian mythology,” as the given names for the two princes who have been raised as Guiderius and Arviragus (287).

²⁷⁷ This type of courtly behaviour is also brilliantly parodied in *The Winter’s Tale* when Autolycus, dressed in Florizel’s clothes, establishes his credentials as a courtier:

... Seest thou not
the air of court in these enfoldings? hath not
my gait in it the measure of the court? receives not
thy nose court-odour from me? Reflect I not on thy
baseness, court-contempt?” (4.4.730-34)

... seeke to goe cloathed in the araye of others, and are blowen vp, to an exceeding haughtines of minde, ... through the titles, dignities, and stemmes of their first noble parents” (Ferne 27). Outside court, Cloten’s prowess is restricted to the violence of his verbal effusions, such as the boastful “Die the death!” (4.2.97). His defeat by someone he believes to be a “villain base” (4.2.80) duly “excludes him from association with the elite band of warriors” (Feerick 99), those who not only have an “arm as big as thine” (4.2.77), but who can “can grip as hard as / Cassibelan” (3.1.41-42.). Tagged as “nothing but mutation” (4.2.133) by the royal antibodies of the play, therefore, Cloten is exterminated without further ado. Identified as “the queen’s son” (4.2.153) his decapitated head is returned to the ‘derogate’ matrilineal line by which he is defined. As Feerick maintains: “Shakespeare ... rejects the genealogical graft that Cloten embodies, imagining instead the continuity of Brute’s (and Britons’) strengths in the future” (100).

Having effectively done away with self-professed gentlemen in ‘silly habits’ by the end of the fourth act, the play works hard to reconstruct authentic ‘Britons’ from scratch or, to use a more topical term, by blood.²⁷⁸ From this point on, ‘true’ nobility is firmly linked to evidence of birth and lineage, “an invisible instinct,” as Belarius puts it, “To royalty unlearn’d, honour untaught” (4.2.177, 178). Being invisible, however, proof can only be established through words and deeds; through ‘history’ – a narrative of origin – and virtuous action.²⁷⁹ Valour in action is accordingly showcased by a short performative interlude which is inserted into the dramatic proceedings. The second scene of the fifth act shows Cymbeline first being taken by the enemy and then rescued by the band of brothers: “... *the Britons fly, Cymbeline is taken: then enter to his rescue, BELARIUS, GUIDERIUS, and ARVIRAGUS ... Re-enter POSTHUMUS, and seconds the Britons. They rescue Cymbeline and exeunt*” (5.2. Stage direction). In his editorial notes, Nosworthy remarks on the absence of the “customary battle-scene trappings,” something which leads him to suggest that this pantomimic interlude presents an unconventional and therefore, by implication, somewhat unsuccessful attempt to utilise the antiquated device of the dumb show (147n Stage direction): “the audience is presented with a battle-scene so unconventional that suspense turns almost to bewilderment” (147n Stage direction). The effect of bewilderment, I would like to argue, is intentional: as with the dumb shows in *Pericles*, ‘showing’ is revealed to be insufficient; it requires telling to become meaningful. Consequently, the demonstration of British martial prowess is embellished by a long and convoluted retreat

²⁷⁸ In her book on *Strangers in the Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2010), Jean Feerick offers a persuasive account of the way in which the early modern understanding of ‘race,’ of physical and social difference, was rooted in hierarchies of lineage or “symbolics of blood” (12).

²⁷⁹ As Patrick Collinson outlines in his account of the early modern understanding of ‘History,’ “the words ‘story’ and ‘history,’ ... were for this period interchangeable” (59).

into narrative, or rather, history, when Posthumus relates the miraculous turn of events in Britain's favour to one of the lords who has fled from battle. The lord's incredulous remark that "This was strange chance: / A narrow lane, an old man, and two boys" (5.3.52) is met by Posthumus' scathing reply: "do not wonder at it: you are made / Rather to wonder at the things you hear / Than to work any" (5.3.53-55). In line with *Cymbeline's* self-conscious take on romantic conventions, a ready-made proverbial version of the event – "Two boys, an old man twice a boy, a lane, / Presev'd the Britons, was the Romans' bane" (5.3. 57-58) – is both affirmed and ridiculed: "Will you rhyme upon't, / And vent it for a mock'ry?" (5.3.55-56). The metadramatic irony here is that Posthumus' eyewitness account is drawn from another's *Historie*: Holinshed's account of the Scottish defeat of the Danes at the Battle of Luncarty (c. 908 AD). Recorded by Holinshed in the second volume of his *Chronicles* (1577), the historical battle was won by the fortuitous intervention of "an husbandman, with two of his sons ... named Haie, a man strong and stiffe in making and shape of bodie, but indued with valiant courage" (Holinshed qtd. in Nosworthy 190). Armed with nothing but their valour and a plow, Holinshed describes how these three men "placed themselues ouerthwart the lane, beat them backe whom they met fleeing, and spared neither friend nor fo" (qtd. in Nosworthy 190). What *Cymbeline* is effectively dramatising here, then, is history in the making; or rather, the making of history, with all its uneasy allegiances to myth. As Mikalachki has observed, "the transformation of the dramatic stand in 5.2 into narrative, aphorism and proverb in 5.3 represents instant historization" (316). It is a form of historisation, however, as I would like to argue, that contrary to Camden's rigorous separation between poetry and history, consciously flaunts its fair share of romance.

Diagnosed by Granville-Barker as "dramatically redundant," the scene that follows spectacularly demonstrates how fiction can be turned into (pseudo-historical) fact when a family of Leonati appear as ghostly apparitions to the sleeping Posthumus (496). Appealing to Jupiter to end Posthumus' trials and tribulations in form of a versified masque,²⁸⁰ the 'posthumous' relatives duly take turns to catalogue Posthumus' merits in epic fourteeners.²⁸¹ The effect of such a spectral blast from the past is decidedly ambiguous: on the one hand it

²⁸⁰ This device was borrowed from Stuart court masques, where "a group of characters appears to question, challenge or doubt the justice of existence, the equity of a sovereign's government, or the rationale of a divine providence" (Graham Holderness qtd. in Kiefer, *Shakespeare's* 149).

²⁸¹ According to Lucy Munro, this choice of metre, most commonly associated with earlier forms of the 'English' epic, was outworn by the time Shakespeare wrote his late plays (cf. 218). Shakespeare had previously used this verse style for comic effect in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but I agree with Munro that in this context this stylistic intervention is not used just to parody archaic traditions (cf. 206). Instead, as with the introduction of ancient Gower in *Pericles*, it serves several purposes, most obviously to signal the other-worldliness of the ghosts through different style and diction. It is also used in the theophany involving Jupiter that opens the anonymous romantic comedy, *The Rare Triumphs Love and Fortune* (1582), one of *Cymbeline's* many intertexts.

finally furnishes Posthumus with a (g)ripping tale of his origins: “ript” (5.4.45) from his mother’s womb, his *post mortem* birth not only links him to the legendary founding figures of the Roman and British empires respectively, it also “preserves him from the ‘woman’s part’ in labour” (Plescia 139). Julius Caesar was purportedly born by Caesarian section while the mother of Brutus of Troy, the eponymous mythical founder and first king of Britain, died at his birth.²⁸² On the other hand, this newly revealed line of aristocratic descent is based on Posthumus’ father’s somewhat nebulous claim to fame: “Great nature, like his ancestry, / Moulded the stuff so fair, / That he deserved the praise o’th’ world, / as great Sicilius’ heir” (5.4.48-51). Rather than help ‘delve him to the root,’ the name Sicilius, as Curran has argued, “epitomizes the plethora of royal nobodies inhabiting the pre-Roman section of the British History” (294). Instead of clarifying matters, the evanescent referentiality of Posthumus’s family members forcibly draws attention to the “vagueness and obscurity” that characterises the “time-honored Galfridian Brute myth, that Britain maintained a glorious royal lineage as old as the Trojan war” (Curran 294, 279). This tension between various forms and claims of literary and national heritage is also underscored by the distinct use of the fourteener, a poetic style famously used by George Chapman for one of the first English translation of Homer’s *Iliad* (1611). As Lucy Munro explains, the adoption of this stylistic feature serves to heighten the epic undertones of Posthumus’ redemption by “capitalising on the archaic grandeur and emotional heft of the established form” (222). As product of mixed English and classical heritage, the use of archaic speech-patterns also “signals the ghosts’ own liminal position as British or proto-English inhabitants of the Roman empire” (L. Munro 221). As a vernacular appropriation of an ancient classical form, however, its proper application had been the subject of controversy since the late 1570s. Puttenham, writing about the importance of matching subject to style in 1589, warns of the pitfalls of using high style which is all too easily “disgraced and made foolish and ridiculous by all words affected, counterfeit, and puffed up, as it were a windball carrying more countenance than matter” (237). Used without decorum, it produces an effect that Puttenham rather suggestively compares to a pageant figure stuffed with brown paper bombast: “these midsummer pageants in London, where to make the people wonder are set forth great and ugly giants marching as if they were alive ... but within they are stuffed full of brown paper and tow, which the shrewd boys underpeering do guilefully discover and turn to a great derision” (237-38). Once again, therefore, we are confronted with the play’s peculiar tendency to point to its own lack of substance or rather, substitute status –

²⁸² On the significance of Posthumus’s birth in relation to changing perceptions of child-birth and midwifery and medical colonisation in early modern culture, see Iolanda Plescia’s “From me was Posthumus ript’: *Cymbeline* and the Extraordinary Birth,” *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare’s Rome*, ed. Maria Del Sapio Garbero, Nancy Isenberg and Maddalena Pennacchia (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010) 135-48.

what the play itself aptly refers to as “simular proof” (5.5.200). The dividing line between noble and ‘counterfeit,’ authoritative and ‘affected,’ Roman and British, history and romance is shown to be provisional, selective, and capable of being redefined subject to modulating allegiances.

As if to throw into relief the questionable authority of such ghostly claims, the play serves up what Nosworthy calls an “effective solvent” (xxxvii): the show-stopping descent of the *deus ex machina* itself. Summoned by the ghosts’ plea to end Posthumus’ trials and tribulations, the “thunder-master” (5.4.30) himself appears in a stage direction full of spec(tac)ular promise: “*Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle: he throws a thunderbolt*” (5.4. Stage direction).²⁸³ Within the space of thirty lines, providential order is established in a play that has so far proved to be, to use Mikalachki’s particularly fitting turn of phrase, a “headless tableau of masterlessness” (109). Once his audience has had a chance to recover from the impact of such an audio-visual bolt from the blue, Jupiter’s prophetic rhymes leave no room for doubt: all will be well. As regards Posthumus, the “low-laid son our godhead will uplift” (5.4.104). In accordance with the romantic credo “the more delay’d, delighted” (5.4.102), further prescient detail, Jupiter proclaims, can be found in a “tablet” (5.4.109) which he will leave on Posthumus’ breast. Without further wasting of any “celestial breath” (5.4.114), the Roman king of gods ascends back to his crystal palace and the mollified Leonati vanish into thin air.

Interestingly, therefore, in this particular instance the authority of written text, a book, supersedes theatrical spectacle. Again, a material object is presented as holding the key to meaning. But is it, as Posthumus is quick to question, another “garment / Nobler than it covers” (5.4.134-35), or – that rare exception – “as good as promise” (5.4.137)? Its writing certainly proves to be more “fangled” (5.4.134) than illuminating as it contains the “senseless speaking” (5.4.148) characteristic of the periculous riddles that mark and mar Pericles’s fortunes. Like Pericles, who finds himself playing the role of ‘Fortune’s tennis ball’ for most of the play, Posthumus – on death row in a British prison – sees in the unintelligibility of the prophecies a reflection of his inability to make sense of his destiny. Rather than try to construct meaning, however, he willingly subscribes himself to its meaningless promise: “Be what it is/ The action of my life is like it, which I’ll keep, if but for sympathy” (5.4.149-51). Even though there has been much critical speculation on the significance of this book, in light of the play’s self-conscious engagement with a variety of textual authors and authorities, it is tempting to think that the tablet represents a pointed reference to the missing source text on which the myth of Britain is based. In his Prologue to his *Historia regum Britanniae*, Monmouth

²⁸³ For the representation of Jupiter in contemporary masques, plays and pageants, see Frederick Kiefer’s *Shakespeare’s Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), esp. 149-58.

claims that his account is based on “a very old book in the British tongue, which set out in excellent style a continuous narrative of all their deeds from the first king of the Britons, Brutus, down to Cadualadrus, son to Caduallo” (4). Needless to say, this book never materialised. Like the *Historia*, Jupiter’s ‘tablet’ incorporates a series of vague and apocalyptic prophecies about the future of Britain, prophecies that in *Cymbeline* are eventually deciphered as having “some seeming” (5.5.453) by the somewhat laboured interpretations of a Soothsayer with a ‘philharmonic’ bent. Be that as it may, the spectacular intervention by the *dies pater* of this play re-inscribes the blank-slate of Posthumus’ story within greater historical and political matters: as newly confirmed representative of what is “best in British manhood” (Nosworthy xliv), and as posthumous descendant of classical Rome, Posthumus prefigures “the line that sutures the British and Roman alliance at the end of the play” (Plescia 138), and thus, by prophetic extension, bodies forth that modern Augustus, James the peacemaker, and “that Vnion of two ancient and famous Kingdoms ... made in my blood” (James I, *King* 134-35).

In the final scene, the play has come full circle from an opening where “You do no meet a man but frowns” (1.1.1-2) to an ending where “There’s business in these faces” (5.5.23). Both demand an explanation, and the final scene is notorious for its endeavour to recapitulate the play’s “misalignments of things heard with things seen” (B. Smith, “Eyeing” 52). As Richard Meek has observed, however, “the story that is pieced together ... is striking for its fragmentary and unsatisfactory nature” (235). This effect is not mitigated by performance. Instead, as Benedict Nightingale finds in his review of Cooke’s 2003 RSC production of the play, *Cymbeline* has “a plot so insanely intricate that it takes aeons to wind up and leaves us asking, like the poor befogged king of Roman-dominated Britain, ‘does the world go round?’” (n. pag.). The demand for narrative clearly refuses to be ousted in this historical romance that, after all, in its dramatic conception is so like the ‘old tales’ from which it borrows, that it is both impossible and possibly even undesirable to expect full disclosure. Instead, the play seems to invite us, along with the astonished *Cymbeline*, to admire the skill of its dramatic contrivance, the way in which in this play, at least, any “unity in the proofs” is made “pregnant by circumstance” (*WT* 5.2.32, 31).

Ready to reward his loyal subjects for their heroic battle action, *Cymbeline* to his vexation finds that “Names do not match bodies; stories do not match actions.” (B. Smith, “Eyeing” 51). Presented with the news of the death of his queen, *Cymbeline* is forced to confront the somewhat unsettling fact that he was fooled by appearances all along: “precious deeds,” it transpires, have come from those “that promised nought / But beggary and poor looks” (5.5.8-9), while the one person that promised most “to / O’ercome you with her show” (5.5.54) has proven to be inscrutable:

Mine eyes

Were not in fault, for she was beautiful:
Mine ears that heard her flattery, nor my heart
That thought her like her seeming. It had been vicious
To have mistrusted her ... (5.5.63-65)

Any misgivings Cymbeline may be feeling about the error of his ways – “it was folly in me” (5.5.67) – are clearly forgotten a few lines later when he spontaneously decides to take into protection the Roman page, Fidele, solely on the basis that “Thou hast look’d thyself into my grace” (5.5.94). Posthumus, on the other hand, clearly has not (yet) been equipped with such magnanimity, nor with such “rare instinct” (5.5.383), however foolish. Consistently incapable of distinguishing “‘Twixt amorous and villainous” (5.5.195), Posthumus rejects Innogen’s advance by striking her to the ground: “Thou scornful page, / There lie thy part” (5.5.228-89). Again, it takes a more astute observer to spell out for Posthumus that “You ne’er kill’d Imogen till now” (5.5.231). As with the recognition scenes in *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*, however, it appears to take such aggressive rejection of the beloved ‘object’ to enable a mutually sustaining embrace. Cymbeline, clearly oblivious to any such psychological complications, happily re-admits Innogen into the familial fold and embraces her as “my flesh, my child” (5.5.264).

To Cymbeline’s surprise (“When shall I hear all through? 5.5.383), there is more domestic and dynastic matter to be restored. In marked contrast to Iachimo’s verbose (and thus markedly indecorous) admission of guilt, the royal heirs proper distinguish themselves, “unlike our courtiers” (5.3.136), as men of few words, and therefore, in the context of this play at least, “As good as promise” (5.3.137). Questioned on the whereabouts of Cloten, Pisanio’s elaborate and open-ended account of his “unchaste purpose” (5.5.286) gets short shrift from Guiderius: “Let me end the story: / I slew him there” (5.5.287). A natural performer, Guiderius likes to suit action to word: according to Belarius, his tendency to physically enact the stories he hears – “he sweats, / Strains his young nerves, and puts himself in posture/ That acts my words” (3.4.93-95) – is another tell-tale manifestation of his royal DNA, the “princely blood” that “flows in his cheek” (3.24.93). Still, there is the matter of manslaughter to consider: standing accused of killing a prince, Guiderius, true to character, does nothing to mince his words (or his actions): “I have spoke it, and I did it... I cut off’s head, / And I am right glad he is not standing here / To tell this tale of mine” (5.5.290-97). The rest of his party evidently disagrees: such “dangerous speech” (5.5.313) is immediately contextualised by Belarius who is at pains to establish that the heinous act of murder was in fact committed by “gentle princes” (5.5.337), the true “issue of your loins, my liege, / And blood of your begetting” (5.5.331). But Belarius is no Jupiter. The fact that Arviragus’ identity can be proven

by “a most curious mantle, wrought by th’hand / Of his queen mother” (5.5.361-162), is immediately dismissed by Cymbeline in favour of a more stable identifier (and one, perhaps, that involves less of a woman’s part). The imprint of patrimony, it transpires, is conveniently evidenced by a “natural stamp” (5.5.367); the star-shaped mole on Guiderius’s neck.²⁸⁴ As Feerick notes: “Transferring contemporary distinctions of dress to the flesh itself, Shakespeare’s marks seek to render genealogical ties material and visible” (91). It is this external manifestation of royal blood that effectively enables Cymbeline to fashion himself, like Pericles before him, as “A mother to the birth of three” (5.5.370). Even though this scene therefore works to re-valorise “the body as locus of one’s true identity – as a site marked indelibly by the inscriptions of race and lineage” (Feerick 81), it is somewhat difficult to ignore the fact that this very assumption had earlier in the play been called into doubt. After all, it was another mole, crimson-spotted, which has bred much (tragic) confusion about the sexual (and, by implication, moral) status of the female body in this play. For Feerick, “by transmuting the Briton’s artificial stains into natural marks, *Cymbeline* would seem to repress the body’s alienability – its status as subject to various imprinting processes, which may or may not supplement that of the father (91). By rehabilitating the significance and legitimacy of such “mark[s] of wonder” (5.5.366), *Cymbeline*, Feerick concludes, “not only domesticates the spectre of a barbarous British past but also moves towards stabilizing a body that otherwise appears capable of profound mobility” (91). Natural stamps trump shifting liveries and Cloten’s atavistically patriotic idiot savant is dramatically superseded by fresh, albeit savage royal blood which promises to infuse the notion of a British imperial future with new lease of life: “lopp’d branches, which ... shall ... be / jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow” (5.5.339-41). It is an “issue,” the Soothsayer optimistically finds, that “Promises Britain peace and plenty” (5.5.458-59).

With Iachimo pardoned, ring and bracelet are restored to their rightful owners. The restoration of the royal family and the marital re-union pave the way for the peaceful re-incorporation of Britain within the Roman body politic. It is a civil re-union that culminates in a Jamesian “vision of harmonious internationalism and accommodation” (Marcus, “Unease” 142) where “A Roman, and a British ensign wave / Friendly together” (5.5.481-82). Where history meets romance, however, myth is not far behind. Almost like a (posthumous) afterthought, the Soothsayer Philharmonious is summoned to “declare the meaning” (5.5.435) of Jupiter’s final words in this matter. The Soothsayer’s “skill in the construction” (5.5.434) is

²⁸⁴ Feerick connects this reference to a ‘star-shaped mole’ to the ancient British practice of tattooing bodies with woad, thereby engaging in a kind of “genealogical semiotics ... analogous to the elaborate codification of clothes in early modern England” (88).

shown to lie in his application of pseudo-etymology. As Mikalachki has noted, the Soothsayer's strained transpositions of "tender air ... *mollis aer*" (5.5.447) into "*mulier* ... this most constant wife" (5.5.448-49) recall the "involved and equally fanciful antiquarian deviations of the name Britain" (or Brutayne), that can be found in Monmouth's *Historia*; deviations that had been exposed as 'counterfeit' by early seventeenth-century historiography (320.)

In *Cymbeline*, the overabundance of meaning produced by 'surplus matter,' the multiple matchings of signs, tokens, bodies and their stories, ultimately resists the notion of any fixity of prints, be they historical, fictional or inscribed in the fabric of the body. A generic 'hodge-podge' to the end *Cymbeline* never denies being a contrived affair. This does not mean that it does not have its own dramatics of wonder to offer: as if to counterbalance the many violent speculations and/or specular violations that the body has been subject to, the eternal question that is asked at the ending of each of the late romances under discussion – "Know'st thou him thou look'st on?" (5.5.110) – is here movingly and spectacularly dramatised in an especially vibrant example of a *tableau vivant*:

See,
Posthumus anchors upon Imogen;
And she (like harmless lightning) throws her eye
On him: her brother, me: her master hitting
Each object with joy: the counterchange
Is severally in all (5.5.393-98)

In a neat reversal, the ocularcentric conceit that was used to express the pain caused from 'after-eyeing' the disappearing object at the beginning of the play is here replaced with the transformative pleasure caused by the recognition of the object as (familiar) subject. Unlike the linear trajectory that characterises and limits the efficacy of narrative, visual recognition is here staged as a dynamic multidirectional process; a vibrant criss-crossing of eyebeams that establishes reciprocal links between objects which, once hit 'feelingly,' are ignited with joy. For a brief moment in the play, "long inter'gatories" (5.5.393) are here deemed superfluous.

5 Conclusion

I summon the supernatural beings
Who first contrived
The transmogrifications
Into the stuff of life.
You did it for your own amusement.
Descend again, be pleased to reanimate
This revival of those marvels.
Reveal, now, exactly
How they were performed
From the beginning
Up to this moment.
(Hughes 3)

I confess, however, that I am not a very good materialist. Every time I try to write about the body, the writing ends up being about language. (Butler, *Undoing* 198)

In times like ours when we are encouraged to believe that we have bodies at our disposal or, alternatively, to be disposed of, when the notion of an embodied sense of self is denounced as being either constricting or constructed, an inquiry into pre-modern ways of ‘knowing matter’ smacks of a nostalgic attempt to put the guts back into the Cartesian machine whose disembowelled ghost has haunted the human subject in various guises. While this thesis has not attempted to reify guts, be they early or modern, its aim has been to reinstate the performing body as a site/sight of knowledge within the dramatic analysis of three of Shakespeare’s late romances.

Looking back at this endeavour, post-humously, so to speak, in an attempt to chart its accomplishments and/or limitations, I find myself asking the very same question Butler raises in her preface to *Bodies That Matter*: “Which Bodies come to matter – and why?” (xii). Take *Pericles*, for example. My initial approach was simple, naive perhaps. Re-read the text with an ear attuned to somatic references, try to envisage physical presence, the play in performance(s), take it from there. The first four lines of the play (and an editorial intervention in form of a stage direction) is all it took to make me realise that by doing so, I was already assuming a lot of ‘givens,’ i.e. the text, the space, the social and cultural conditions and conventions of performance, the actor, the manner of acting, the blocking, costumes, audience, etc.

Consider again:

[ACT I]
Enter Gower
[*Before the Palace of Antioch, with heads displayed above the entrance.*]

To sing a song that old was sung,

From ashes ancient Gower is come,
Assuming man's infirmities,
To glad your ear, and please your eyes. (1-4)

Reading this performatively:

- *Speculate!* Who comes on stage (what stage and in front of what type of audience)? And how (physical appearance, costume, status, movement, gesture)? What is the *mise en scène* (where is it set, what props are visible, 'heads displayed above entrance')? And when is this supposed to be happening?
- *Listen!* This does not sound like your typical Shakespearean verse or prose – why is that?
- *Interpret/Investigate!* 'Ancient Gower'? Can it be *the* Gower as in 'Gower, John (d. 1408)'? What is going on here? Are we seriously supposed to be witnessing the (re)-birth of an author, and from medieval times? In a play authored by whom exactly? And why is the assumption of 'man's infirmity' considered a requisite for pleasure? For whom? How?

All sorts of questions are raised, and all of them matter. As it turns out, the appearance of just one body on this textual stage is all it takes to displace any other considerations that could have been pursued. After all, to the reader in search of bodily matter *Pericles* immediately offers up something too intriguing to miss: a corpo-real manifestation of the play's source, a resurrection of its author, who also happened to have a real-life existence apart from the play. This audacious repurposing of a dramatic convention, the choric go-between, would not have been new to Jacobean theatregoers, but – as the play's popularity in its time suggests – had never been used to greater sensational effect. Shakespeare's Gower is the body that matters, therefore, in my reading of *Pericles*, and it matters because its meaning – the pleasure to be derived from hearing/seeing this play – is so emphatically tied up with its embodied presence. It is a presence that is distinctly corpo-real; being in flesh and blood is what matters here, rather than whose flesh and blood is 'doing the being'. At the same time, therefore, that this play exposes its bare bones, its narrative substrate, it also insists that it is, in effect, theatrical *liveness*, the event of bodily performance, that enables medieval Gower to breathe life into his moral poem, to turn words into bodies. The presence of performing bodies is something that enables his audience, in turn, to experience language as a vital(ising) agency, as a specific way of doing, or, to use Worthen's phrase, as a "palpable *act* of dramatic performance" ("Reading" 75).

Within the space of four lines *Pericles* successfully co-opts its somatically attuned reader (me) on to its own means of looking 'awry' at a dramatic text. Reviewed through the 'corrective'

(here read metapoetic) prism of its on-stage author, the play becomes meaningful not as a mangled cross-breed of a work best forgotten (or denied full membership in the Shakespearean canon) but as a conscious (and conspicuous) exploration of the ‘restorative’ nature of a dramatic form that ‘moulds’ the literary and the lifelike through the generative power of embodied language.

Restoration requires loss. It also requires recovery – with a difference. *Pericles*, as I proceed to discover with the help of psychoanalytic and (post)structuralist approaches, delivers on all accounts. As the play unfolds off-limits, across vast expanses of time and space, analogous re-stagings of sexually charged confrontations between fathers and motherless daughters successively re-story an archetypal tale of death, incest and tyranny into a restorative dramatisation of rebirth, recovery, and procreative reunion; binary pairings that reverberate throughout the play in a physiological, rhetorical, moral as well as political sense. The eponymous “hero’s exile from fairy-tale clarities and closures,” as Palfrey has suggested, evidently “raises spectres which only a new genre ... can allay” (62). As the play, steered by its choric body of knowledge, works its way through successive attempts at combining ‘show and tell’ for its own moral and pleasurable purposes, the frequent conjunctions of body and language, of giving birth and telling a tale serve as a reminder that what is being dramatised here is the storytelling process itself; the moment at which Gower’s quaint tale is transformed into the sensual immediacy of drama, where “motes and shadows” (4.4.21), with the help of the audience’s imaginative engagement, turn into vital presences, however ‘infirm.’

Gorfain’s observation on *Pericles*, “the epistemological problem that knowledge may be no more than perception yields both doubt and celebration,” rings true for all the plays under discussion, but perhaps most emphatically so for *The Winter’s Tale* (134). Here, the miraculous transformation from statue to woman, marble to marvel is presented as a performative accomplishment, an aesthetic feat enabled by a simple but affective/effective shift in perspective.

Within the world of *The Winter’s Tale* it is the sensuous body that takes centre stage, both as an object of anxiety and as a subject for delight. The first half of the play plunges its historico-materialist reader headlong into the abyss of humoral pathology, a psychosomatic world, where an excess of melancholy passion causes all kinds of grief. Leontes’ jealous imagination is fuelled by what cannot be seen and thus cannot be known: the content of his wife’s pregnant body. Re-viewed through the refracting prism of his ‘affection,’ ‘gracious’ issue, Hermione’s maternal body, becomes a source for pathological knowledge, a hermeneutics of suspicion. The self-generating nature of Leontes’ epistemophilia, his craving to see more, know more, inaugurates a crisis about knowability that eventually negates Hermione’s status as wife and the

legitimacy of her 'issue'. It is, in other words, the familiar scenario of a Shakespearean tragedy we are presented with, a scenario that inevitably requires sensuous corporeality, here given material shape in Hermione's maternal body, to be exorcised and contained by being rendered inanimate. The interesting proposition that *The Winter's Tale* makes with its own dramatic structure, is that such a 'theatre of grief' is insufficient. Accordingly, the play proceeds to adjust its 'sad tale of winter' to a new generic decorum, one whose expressive aim it is "to purge with pleasure the sadness of the hearers" (Guarini 524).

In the second half of the play, the play's complex engagement with embodied cognition and aesthetics that characterises Guarini's dramaturgical theory of tragicomedy culminates in the somatic spectacle of the statue scene. Within the generative space of Paulina's gallery, Leontes is encouraged to re-view the object of his tragic 'issue,' the inanimate female body, and to recognise the inadequacy of its "dead likeness" (5.3.15). Willing signs of life into inanimate matter, Leontes, under Paulina's (and Ovid's) 'affective' tutelage, gradually warms to the epistemological potential of a "physiology of knowing," one in which "passions 'hear' sensations before reason does" (B. Smith, "Hearing" 27). Very simply put: Leontes learns to see his wife by recognising her feelingly. As sensuality co-acts with sense and imaginative faith redeems scepticism, Leontes is able to "behold ... the statue move indeed" (5.3.87-88). Recognising the animate female body as a source of restorative rather than pathological knowledge, Leontes affectively/effectively becomes alive to the possibility of wonder, that 'rarest dream,' where stone metamorphoses to flesh, art to life and loss enables restoration.

In *The Winter's Tale* this visceral experience of theatrical liveness uniquely does not require immediate narrative resolution. The final lines of the play instead propagate leisurely willingness to linger in the in-between:

Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
Each one demand, and answer to his part
Perform'd in this wide gap of time, since first
We were dissever'd (5.3.152-55)

As animated and animating source of knowledge, the mutable romantic body not only thaws stone-cold epistemological rigidities. Rejecting the monumental for the living, absolutist knowledge for generative uncertainty, it here forcefully reminds us of the sensual pleasures involved in becoming corpor(e)al.

While all of Shakespeare's late plays "question and toy with their generic boundaries," *Cymbeline*, with parodic persistence, exposes its reader/spectator to the cogs in its romantic machine (Pollard 35). *Cymbeline* revels in being a headless play, a romance *in extremis* where bodies, like the accessories that cling to and/or slip off them, seem to be mere pawns in a

curious game of *Fort-Da*. Moreover, the wordy foreplay of the first two acts, its convoluted linguistic matter, drives apart and entangles the various protagonists in protracted mis/understandings that lead to spurious, and in some cases tragic, recognitions; recognitions, whose 'truth' is substantiated by bodily signs and supplements which come to surpass the body and escape its sensuous control. As vested sign that requires reading, the 'body beneath' is exposed to be insufficient as a stable point of reference. In *Cymbeline*, there is no naked truth. Instead, the body establishes itself as site/sight for the crisis of knowledge.

In *Cymbeline*, then, there are no sensuous bodies to be had. Here, it is (bodily) props that matter, and it is this play's fascination with the transformative potency of its 'parts,' something that it also flaunts within in its own dramatic conception, which particularly invites object-centric approaches and new materialist readings. In their "wager ... to give materiality its due," these approaches highlight "the myriad ways in which matter is both self-constituting and invested with – and reconfigured by – intersubjective interventions that have their own quotient of materiality" (Coole and Frost 7). It attests to the curious charge that objects have in this play that Cloten's body, even when missing its head, 'speaks more than is set down for him' (cf. *Ham* 3.2.40). It is equally fitting – and entirely in tune with the play's prophetic entanglements – that a 'trunk without its top' is today all that remains of the Prince, whose dynastic promise shapes the play's abiding search for and concern with the 'Matter of Britain'.

Half-way through, with its signifying objects in tatters, the play effects a dramatic re-turn to the 'stuff within': in an overall drive to "fashion less without, and more within" (5.1.33), the play shifts from a sartorial to a historical paradigm of knowledge. Bodies identified by their clothes are replaced by bodies identified by their blood (lineage). Natural stamps trump shifting liveries. Pulling out all its dramatic stops (and textual props) in its notoriously extended denouement, *Cymbeline* moves to re-establish the body as locus of meaning by rehabilitating the significance and legitimacy of its "mark of wonder" (5.5.366). It is an endeavour, however, that is sabotaged by its own surplus matter. The overabundance of meaning produced by the "simular proof" (5.5.200) of its multiple and shifting fictions ultimately, joyfully, resists any attempts at stabilisation.

The bodies that matter in my reading of *Cymbeline*, then, are those that are conspicuously absent. Their traces, however, are encoded in the bodies of text that make up this play's motley. It is the language of romantic poetry, prose, and history that both animates and is animated by the material props that it engages on the stage; the bodies and their pieces of cloth, the rings and bracelets, the letters and books that are carried close to the heart. Recognition of the value of these traces allows the play to unravel with meaning and to conjure up the sophistication of its tapestry.

This study began with the desire to explore the meaning of ‘surplus matter,’ the extra-textual potential of bodies in dramatic texts. It duly concludes with the recognition of a paradox at the heart of such an endeavour, so neatly encapsulated by Butler's confession as quoted in the epigraph. In an attempt to get closer to the lived body and its perceptual worlds, it is ultimately impossible to escape the contradiction at the bottom of performance studies whereby “writing about the body perpetually re-inscribes it within the scriptural economy, perpetually makes it transparent, a representation – perpetually makes it tell its code” (I. Munro 310). It also means owning up to the recognition that whichever bodies matter and whatever meaning they have is "perpetually subject to interested and subjective comprehensions of them" (Knapp and Pence 661). Rather than constituting a neat critical tool, therefore, the ‘bodily close-ups’ I have pursued in this study pose and resist limits of concept or theory. They explore how a shift in perspective, a foregrounding of bodily matters in the conceptualisation of drama, opens up new ways in which critical readings of Shakespeare’s late plays might be approached or even accomplished.

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