

Adam Hansen

**"SOME FALLS ARE MEANS THE HAPPIER TO ARISE"¹
PROCESSES OF JEOPARDY IN SHAKESPEARE'S LATE PLAYS**

"It has been suggested that the English change of *-parti* to *-pardy* was partly influenced by association with French *perdre*, to lose, but it was evidently mainly poetic..."²

Overstating the homogeneity of certain of Shakespeare's late plays (namely the "Romances": *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*) is reductive. Perceiving "a logical evolution toward romance"³ ignores chronological studies' admissions of confusions into dating, insisting too much on a notion of Shakespeare as artist with easily charted developments. It is also to discount the generic dissonances of the plays in question. The 1623 Folio catalogues *The Tempest* as first comedy (hardly last play). *Cymbeline* is final tragedy, and *Pericles* is not even included. Such mechanisms of reproduction defy taxonomies.⁴

These are different plays. Nevertheless there are conspicuous collocations in their dramatic topography, and reflections many, subtle and obvious. New worlds are discovered, families being sundered in storms, to be reconfigured. Admitting the extent of concurrences (hardly "echoes", given debates of chronological privilege) perhaps one of the most significant devices present in various aspects of all of these plays is that of the process of jeopardy. To jeopardize is to make vulnerable. Jeopardy is a defendant's risk of conviction when on trial. Old French contributed a sense of "divided play" or "even chance." In chess it is a problem. It is the position in any game where the possibilities of winning and losing hang in the balance. Yet jeopardy is not of sole interest or autonomous significance

¹ *Cymbeline*, in: *Complete Works* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994), IV.2.406.

² *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989 rpt 1991).

³ Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 7.

⁴ See: Charles Frey, "Interpreting *The Winter's Tale*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 18 (1978): 322.

here. After structures familial, verbal, archetypal or otherwise are jeopardized, when they have been made vulnerable (acknowledging the potential for their loss, degeneration and fall), what occurs is to remember Lucius' words, a process of consolidation whereby such structures are revised, renewed, rising ever stronger. All that had been lost is found. This revival is however predicated and conditional upon previous and potential problematisations. Moments in plays predating those examined here offer homologies, but nowhere do such dual processes of jeopardy and consolidation constellate so vividly with so many features of Shakespeare's dramaturgy as in these late plays.

Significantly then, these dramas are afflicted by a fundamental conditionality. Greene's strident rhetorical antitheses are transposed into more conditional constructions. Leonte's negativism positively affirms future refutation:

Is whispering 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.⁵

Thus too, the "secret dialogue" conducted with "Florio's Montaigne" is "intricate"⁶ insofar as the essay on cannibals is a hymn to relative values:

We are justified therefore in calling these people barbarians by reference to the laws of reason, but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity.⁷

This suits representation in a play where a "thing of darkness"⁸ is acknowledged as being a functional corollary to an authority consequently conditional upon, and not so distinct from, the ruled: "He's but a sot, as I am."⁹ Prospero's comprehension of Caliban's efficacies agrees with Gonzalo's government "by contraries"¹⁰: "We cannot miss him."¹¹

An important concept to introduce here is that of "mocking." Mockery can imitate or deride, emulate or bait:

⁵ *The Winter's Tale*, in: *Complete Works*, I.2.284-296.

⁶ J. P. Brockbank, "The Tempest. Conventions of Art and Empire" in: *Shakespeare's Later Comedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. D. J. Palmer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 382-403, p. 394.

⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, translated with an introduction by J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1958 rpt 1993), p. 114.

⁸ *The Tempest*, in: *Complete Works*, V.1.275.

⁹ *Ibid.*, III.2.89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II.1.141.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I.2.311.

but first, how the poor souls roared, and the sea mock'd them; and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mock'd him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.¹²

Earlier in Shakespeare's career, to mock meant to insult. Semantic shifts occurred until, in these plays, the term performs a crucially ambivalent function.¹³ Imitation is conditional upon an appropriation, however scornful, of the derided "thing", such appropriation enforcing the significance of the thing scorned. To recollect: Prospero disdains and needs Caliban; Caliban is taught to articulate his defiance. Each informs the other. Joined in discrimination by oppositional models, the identities of both are jeopardized and consolidated simultaneously in a process of mutual reproduction.

Thus, this process works at a linguistic level, negative rhetorics affirming their own refutation, Leontes silently voicing responses he disdains (and yet will privilege), as it does in terms of authority. So too, generically, do the late plays "mock" another form, that of tragedy. They copy, reconfigure and perhaps render ridiculous the terrors tragedy revealed, yet the power of such terrors survives, inherently unforgettable in reactionary responses.

Typically astute, T. S. Eliot prefaced "Marina" with lines from *Hercules Furens*.¹⁴ An implication is that tragedy foregrounds later comedy. Responding to Tillyard's myths of finality,¹⁵ Barber and Wheeler depict a progress from needful tragedy to responsive, women-centred, later plays.¹⁶ Similarly, considering Plutarch's methodology of parallel lives, Frye constructs an elaborate account of the growth out of and beyond the tale of *Coriolanus* by *Timon*, to create what Barber and Wheeler go so far as to call an "abortive romance."¹⁷ Conjectural and partial these analyses inevitably may be, they do admit the notion that any attainment of semantic power in the late plays, however limited, is enhanced by, and conditional and dependent on, other forms and forces (relations to Romance also suggesting a "parasitic" system¹⁸).

While progress may be confused, it is evident that the issues such models raise imply – perhaps contrary to their intentions – that love and

¹² *The Winter's Tale*, III.3.96–99.

¹³ Peter Berek, "'As We Are Mock'd With Art': From Scorn to Transfiguration," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 18 (1978): 289–305.

¹⁴ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961 rpt 1970), p. 103.

¹⁵ E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 85.

¹⁶ C. L. Barber, Richard P. Wheeler, *The Whole Journey: Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 302.

¹⁷ Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), pp. 156–157; C. L. Barber, R. P. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

¹⁸ J. F. Danby, "Pericles, Arcadia, and the Scheme of Romance" in: *Shakespeare's Later Comedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. D. J. Palmer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 175–195, p. 182.

music do not ultimately and suddenly "succeed tempests"¹⁹ in a "striking"²⁰ change. Though ostensibly malevolent forces may do "no harm",²¹ "savage clamour"²² still resounds. Bestial tragedy becomes a bear to farcically ravage Antigonus in an awful tempest, pathos and bathos all too literally blurring in "the chase."²³

Contiguities between sea and sky, Sicilia and Bohemia, and the generations (a young clown encounters things dying and an old shepherd things new born, reworking a tale of deathly churchyards told by an infant whose father will adopt a childish role, called Mamillius by Shakespeare, but Garinter – with intimations of Greek "old man" – in *Pandosto*²⁴) suggest neither comedy nor tragedy have priority. In an idyll things remain to be "Undone, undone!", as costume changes comedically "Unbuckle, unbuckle"; it is a "lucky day" for some, the end for others.²⁵

What such instances represent is "mockery". Powerful forms are copied, being only ever partially abandoned. More broadly, what is "mocked" and hence jeopardized in the late plays, through processes of reaction, reproduction and revision which qualify, rendering all conditional, is drama itself. Ultimately, drama is put on trial, held in the balance in reflexive instances of ambivalent, divided play, threatening the loss of its power.

To explore this phenomenon as it appears in a multiplicity of aspects one might begin by recognising the jeopardy fathers put prospective sons-in-law in when they test their integrity and indeed "physical bravery and sexual ability"²⁶ (problems presenting their own solutions):

[*Aside*] They are both in either's pow'rs; but this swift business
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning
Make the prize light.²⁷

Simonides similarly dissembles to accuse, making Pericles uneasy to gratifyingly acquit him.²⁸ These indictments, acts typical to a blocking *senex*, are as safe as Prospero's storms. Ferdinand and Miranda are ultimately seen playing chess, a *fin amors* motif recollecting earlier jeopardy,

¹⁹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Shakespearean Tempest* (London: Methuen, 1953 rpt 1960), p. 220.

²⁰ C. L. Barber, R. P. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

²¹ *The Tempest*, I.2.15.

²² *The Winter's Tale*, III.3.56.

²³ *Ibid.*, I. 57.

²⁴ Robert Greene, *Pandosto. The Triumph of Time*, in: *An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 162.

²⁵ *The Winter's Tale*, IV. 4.452, 637; III.3.131.

²⁶ John Pitcher, "The Poet and Taboo: The Riddle of Shakespeare's 'Pericles,'" *Essays and Studies* (1982): 17.

²⁷ *The Tempest*, I.2.451–452.

²⁸ *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in: *Complete Works*, II.5.

Miranda securely toying with Ferdinand with claims akin to her father's ("Sweet lord, you play me false").²⁹ Such safeties suggest that for all fears of a lurking "false Aeneas",³⁰ the young men are not really on trial in these mere "phases of hostility."³¹ Eliot³² and Barber and Wheeler are right to insist upon the significance of women in these plays, but not purely because they embody regenerative virtue, for those with whom the fathers have problems are, indeed, women. The potential invested in the "politicized femininity"³³ of girls and wives is protected by those aware that for all their "merciful construction,"³⁴ innocence and grace, their assumed wards at times crave "meat".³⁵ Thus they are tested, in language and scenes explicitly evocative of legal discourses. Hermione enters, as to her trial, her continence qualified. Imogen is likewise jeopardized. Posthumus and Iachimo determine to draw up "covenants", setting things down by "lawful counsel."³⁶ Iachimo slyly seeks Imogen's "pardon", as he condemns her further.³⁷ The "articles" of her damnation are curious.³⁸ Mapping, Iachimo devises an "inventory", stating the bracelet is "slippery".³⁹ Denying nothing to allow everything to be affirmed, he offers Posthumus a "corporal sign," material signification required to confirm other stains on Imogen's honour.⁴⁰ Such physical inscriptions become marks upon her. It is a convention of romances, to have the authority of material artefacts consolidate recognitions.⁴¹ This is perverted here, such artefacts now making decency dissolute. This fallibility of the stuff of these plays, exposed as women are tried, manifests concerns with the fabric of communication (a revealing fardel could contain a French sense of disguise and dissimulation⁴²). As Leontes publishes his attack on Hermione, so do covenant and inventory arraign Imogen, the blots on characters being

²⁹ *The Tempest*, V.I.172. See: Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energies in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 142-144.

³⁰ *Cymbeline*, III.4.56.

³¹ Northrop Frye, *On Shakespeare*, ed. Robert Sandler (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 176.

³² "My daughter," "Marina", p. 104.

³³ Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 198.

³⁴ *Henry VIII*, in: *Complete Works*, Epilogue I. 10.

³⁵ *Pericles*, II.3.32.

³⁶ *Cymbeline*, I.4.139, 159.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I.6.177.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I.4.150.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II.2.30-34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II.4.119.

⁴¹ *Pericles*, V.3.21-24.

⁴² S. Palfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 236 (note).

eminently textual: "I must be ripp'd. To pieces with me!"⁴³ People, letters, and signs that should save, are false, corruptible, illegible (who can "read a woman?", especially Imogen, like Perdita, "some changeling").⁴⁴

O damn'd paper,
Black as the ink that's on thee! Senseless bauble
Art thou a fedary for this act, and look'st
So virgin-like without?⁴⁵

Judged, words represent themselves equivocally, indicting truth.

Shakespeare has performed this before.⁴⁶ In the "murmur", "prattle", belches and "contagious" breath of *Twelfth Night*, things "poetical" are "more like to be feigned."⁴⁷ A deceiving letter is deposited with "Lie thou there."⁴⁸ Speech is infected with venality, subject to speculations.⁴⁹ Songs having a "dying fall" rattle in *Measure for Measure*, corrupt words permitting devilish Angelo, syphilitic atrophy ensuring the instability that only "hollow" things are "sound".⁵⁰ Amplified, "Foul whisp'rings" by "imperfect speakers" thunder in tragic fogs.⁵¹

Speakers of the late plays problematise themselves with even grater intensity, betraying a resignation to, and cynical apprehension of, what communication can and cannot do:

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say "Not guilty."⁵²

Leontes rubbishes the oracle. In Pisanio's words a letter is a "Senseless bauble," an incommunicative ornament to disgust Perdita.⁵³ Equally, "the slipperiness of language feeds Leontes' growing madness," double meanings

⁴³ *Cymbeline*, III.4.51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, V.5.48. *The Winter's Tale*, III.3.113.

⁴⁵ *Cymbeline*, III.2.19–22.

⁴⁶ See: Anne Barton, "Shakespeare and the Limits of Language," *Shakespeare Survey* 24 (1971): 19–30.

⁴⁷ *Twelfth Night*, in: *Complete Works*, I.2.32–33; II.3.53: I.5.182–183.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II.5.19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I.2.18; I.3.67.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I.1.4. *Measure for Measure*, in: *Complete Works*, I.2.54.

⁵¹ *Macbeth*, in: *Complete Works*, V.1.69; I.3.70.

⁵² *The Winter's Tale*, III.2.20–24.

⁵³ *The Winter's Tale*, IV.4.349.

being "explosive for his imagination.⁵⁴ Language may have here "a genuinely new constructive power"⁵⁵, but the problem with it is that it constructs too much.

A response to this is to absent it:

The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.⁵⁶

Since language's capacities betray themselves, silence comes to prove everything, providing a "wordless communion."⁵⁷ But the denial of language is conditional on that which might have been said going unsaid. This cannot totally erase what communication is, for "silence itself may prescript that which will fill" absence.⁵⁸ A Bohemian servant recounts songs in which bawdy gaps are filled by a phrase doing no harm to ears, or the still explicit message being "hidden."⁵⁹ We are left with problems, not least at the end of *The Tempest*: a series of silences proffer ambiguities in performance.⁶⁰

Speech refutes certainty. So does its absence. The stuff of drama tears itself, makes itself vulnerable, art jeopardizing art: with a "rogue's etymology."⁶¹ Autolycus sells – and Leontes fears – "sheets" more false than true.⁶²

Autolycus, "seizing upon the play's . . . instabilities",⁶³ offers a ballad about a ballad about a woman who "was turn'd into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that lov'd her."⁶⁴ Perdita's priggish frigidity is reflected upon. The joke is on her in a play that laughingly mocks itself. Yet what happens to the integrity of art if she is so qualified? Are all consumers mere sheep to be fleeced by a rude pastor, taking advantage of bucolic Bohemian fun to mimic a shepherd's "Come buy"⁶⁵? And are those who resist to be at best made uneasy, or at worst ridiculed?

⁵⁴ Mary L. Livingston, "The Natural Art of *The Winter's Tale*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 30 (1969): 343.

⁵⁵ S. Palfrey, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

⁵⁶ *The Winter's Tale*, II.2.41–42.

⁵⁷ William H. Matchett, "Some Dramatic Techniques in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (1969): 94.

⁵⁸ S. Palfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 145–146.

⁵⁹ *The Winter's Tale*, IV.4.190–198.

⁶⁰ Philip C. McGuire, *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985), p. 59.

⁶¹ S. Palfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

⁶² *The Winter's Tale*, IV.3.22.

⁶³ S. Palfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶⁴ *The Winter's Tale*, IV.4.269–275.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.4.226.

Suitably, given the conditional constructs of these insecure dramas, much *is* uneasy. Characters are resigned to the inevitable "flatness" of their misery.⁶⁶ Causality putatively simplified, things happen immediately. Mamillius dead, the once seemingly instantly jealous Leontes proclaims

Apollo's angry; and the heavens themselves
Do strike at my injustice.⁶⁷

Compression occurs, like silence, because discursiveness is problematic. A hooting mockery is enforced as fantastical conventions, instantaneously prosaic and extraordinary, are painfully but necessarily apparent:

Howsoe'er 'tis strange,
Or that the negligence may well be laugh'd at,
Yet it is true, sir.⁶⁸

An internal problem of "three performers" such as Posthumus encounters, dynamizes all performative elements.⁶⁹ It is the repugnant Boult who states "Performance shall follow."⁷⁰ Dubious dramas are "rough magic" full of events and ambiguous icons threatening that to which they contribute.⁷¹

The Chorus of *Henry V* petitioned a "Muse of fire," interpreted by Branagh as but a match (itself liable to torch the "wooden O"): this is as aptly ironic as any aforementioned ill-lyricism. We are "kindly to judge," questioning the capacities of the "cockpit". The Chorus self-deprecates: "Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts."⁷²

The persistence of such phenomena in the late plays is considerable:

To sing a song that old was sung.
From ancient ashes Gower is come.
Assuming man's infirmities.
To glad your ear and please your eyes.⁷³

Holding himself in the balance, Gower is jeopardized ("What need speak I?"⁷⁴), appealing to our "fancies' thankful doom,"⁷⁵ the stresses of the Henrician Chorus played out anew by an old teller of stories. When

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, III.2.120.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, III.2.143-144.

⁶⁸ *Cymbeline*, I.1.66-68.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, V.3.

⁷⁰ *Pericles*, IV.2.62.

⁷¹ *The Tempest*, V.1.50.

⁷² *Henry V*, in: *Complete Works*, Prologue.

⁷³ *Pericles* (prologue), 1-4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II.16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, V.2.

Gower's, this is a dumb-show, shadowing later performance, a *mock*, made and not made of language, that threateningly provokes a dissatisfaction with drama (for all we know, Hermione is dead: what reunion could be more important than this and why is it articulated by its absence, and by statements confessing the inarticulacy of those who relate, by those who do so?) as it simultaneously imitates and introduces a consummating fulfilment of which we can but dream (if *this* is displaced, what deferred wonders await; is Hermione alive?). Necessarily, one reunion is perplexingly dislocated to consolidate another. Some falls are indeed the means the happier to arise:

Some griefs are med'inable⁸¹

Comparable assertions are present in other plays, notably in those histories from *Richard II* up to and including *Henry V*, as accords with their liminal contexts,⁸² their notions of the confused organic environment.⁸³ Hal's methodologies of statecraft, as he prepares to stage himself for others to conceive his authority,⁸⁴ their interlockings of norm and deviant, and their oppositional and complimentary figures:

Superfluous branches

We lop away, that bearing boughs may live.⁸⁵

Such an imperative may be discernible in tragedy. Processes of jeopardy and consolidation, of degradations and survivals whereby contraries connect are seemingly common. Yet the late plays offer an apprehension of this that is perhaps more overtly meta-theatrical than anything before (even Hal's sophisticated play with *political* performance expressly that).

Hermione accepts a role that will jeopardize her safety, perceiving that any suffering will ultimately be efficacious:

this action I now go on

Is for my better grace.⁸⁶

Shakespeare does the same, choosing to problematise the art to which volition contributes. Such jeopardies are means by which art can be shown to be recreated. Truths, tried, emerge ever more graceful, if wrinkled. The expediency of the trial in allowing such consolidations is great:

⁸¹ *Cymbeline*, III.2.33.

⁸² *2 Henry IV*, Induction and I.1.1-6.

⁸³ "The strawberry grows underneath the nettle", *Henry V*, I.1.60.

⁸⁴ "My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault", *1 Henry IV*, I.2.206.

⁸⁵ *Richard II*, III.4.63-64.

⁸⁶ *The Winter's Tale*, II.1.121-122.

Most welcome, bondage! for thou art a way,
I think, to liberty.⁸⁷

Truth is not only conditional on falsehood; falsehood creates truth:

Wherein I am false I am honest; not true to be true.⁸⁸

Though the authority of the artefact is assaulted, defeat is not complete ("Can it not do and undo?" notes Cloten of gold, and we must uncomfortably concur with the repugnant thing⁸⁹). For every drowned book, slip of the tongue or "friable"⁹⁰ verse, there is a dedicated Pulina voicing salutary petitions, edifying as they cause a breakdown. She vacillates between a use of dramatic gesture (bringing in the baby Perdita to Leontes; staging Hermione's return), and a lack of it, speaking to Leontes devoid of deceitful pandering, as she tricks us all. Theatre is functional and critically apprehended. *Nothing is resolved.*

Pericles dramatizes how old stories can be told again. Similarly, the silences plaguing the end of *The Tempest* are in fact speaking spaces to tantalize reproducers. Prospero rejects idleness. So does the playwright. We have to work to re-interpret, enduring the same trials.

Each time *The Tempest* moves to conclusion, actors, director, playwright, and all others involved in performing the play find themselves at risk, dependent for success on an audience to give or withhold approval... The result can be a moment of full and free human community, embracing playwright, characters, director, actors, designers and audience, but such a moment occurs just as the performance that brings it into being is ending.⁹¹

Prospero reconfigures ambiguous devices of jeopardy, appeals hurting in order to heal:

And my ending is despair
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer.
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.⁹²

Yet it is Prospero reminding us of our power. Our ability to cleverly construct drama is conditional on the problems of such constructions, problems the drama itself elucidates.

⁸⁷ *Cymbeline*, V.4.3-4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.3.42.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, II.3.73.

⁹⁰ J. F. Danby, "*Pericles, Arcadia, and the Scheme of Romance*," p. 185.

⁹¹ Ph. McGuire, *Speechless Dialect*, p. 62.

⁹² *The Tempest*, Epilogue, ll. 15-18.

This is a synthesis Gower articulates. Commingling the scene and the unseen, sight and sound, he states:

What's dumb in show I'll plain in speech.⁹³

When one is weak the other supports. Yet the "infirmities" of these modes are a product of their reception as much as of their articulation, those to which Gower refers also being ours, not his alone. Like the Chorus of Time. Gower is in fact invested with power (he can speak many tongues, traverse many lands) when we are able to pardon him his crimes. Fundamentally, displayed is not the primacy of play, players or audience, but like so much here, a co-operative, participatory process, in a drama that is tragedy and comedy, idiosyncratic and inimitable, whilst conditioned by other forms.

Why should Shakespeare insist upon this relationship?

O you gods!

Why do you make us love your goodly gifts,
And snatch them straight away?⁹⁴

So laments Pericles, one of many fathers, husbands and friends who will come to exalt those structures and figures lost on their return. The actuality or even prospect of loss inculcates a sense of the worth of things held dear. When Paulina threatens to remove Hermione from Leontes' sight, he comes to despise such an eventuality with passion enough to prove his reawakened faith. Figuring this out, as seen, the power of drama to apprehend its own weaknesses and the ways in which it performs internal processes of criticism, offer means by which an audience can engage critically with theatre. If we are shown how its potency can be lost, we appreciate our role in retrieving it, affirming its survival. This in turn preserves an irresolution that insists upon longevity.

Belarius states "The game is up."⁹⁵ Four more scenes and two full acts remain. Philarmonus constructs a putatively concordant finale, asserting that

The fingers of the pow'rs above do tune
The harmony of this peace.⁹⁶

However, as the Soothsayer's previous divinations proved faulty, Cymbeline is rightfully cautious: "This hath some seeming."⁹⁷ Similarly, Shakespeare

⁹³ *Pericles* III. (prologue). 14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, III.1.21–24.

⁹⁵ *Cymbeline*, III.3.107.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, V.5.464–465.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.2.347–353; V.5.450. See Roger Warren, *Shakespeare in Performance: Cymbeline* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 96.

enhanced the inconclusive tendencies of appropriated genres, notably Romance's proclivity of "encourage copiousness."⁹⁸ And even where versions of such a form offered a clarifying termination, Shakespeare evaded it. Thus, unlike the finalising trials conducted by Sidney's Euarchus,⁹⁹ those enacted by Shakespeare don't simply fix things: they destabilize. Cymbeline utters "Pardon's the word to all."¹⁰⁰ This emphasises his forgiving, yet also his need to try again, to hear anew the responses to his interrogations. It equally suggests that repetitions will occur. Things may alter anew: "What images return."¹⁰¹

Such incessantly reiterative processes may be inflected with archetypal, natural powers, or imbued with the religiosity of Eleusian mysteries or Christian resurrections, as figures cast down in darkness rise to enjoy renaissances in plays replete with figurings of Demeter and Persephone, or "drowned" Kings and Queens. But to privilege a sanctified elementalism is to abstract these plays into universalism. Anthropology is not enough.

To claim that verbal communication is usurped by the soundings of some vague language beyond language, whether silence, music or even vividly orchestrated spectacles for a "new", more refined, Blackfriars audience is equally misguided. Blackfriars, if at all significant, offered a promising yet perhaps insubstantial context: fair shows suggested deceit. Not retiring, Shakespeare was more than willing to contend with old and new relationships within and without drama, and this is manifested in an aesthetic reflexivity that expresses no desire to be a mere producer of masques. He is "neither blandly neo-Christian nor serviceably courtly."¹⁰²

Reckoning with still prominent precursors these plays represent the triumph of time to render all conditional, and yet indicate a triumph over time in apprehension of this. A unique poetry and drama constituted of other poetries and dramas, of conditional clauses, synchronous instants where past, present and future merge, when theatrical figures referencing and qualifying their own communicative status in gestures to an audience ensure a perpetuation of interactions, is an art "less clear and clearer," "less strong and stronger," "more distant than the stars and nearer than the eye."¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Stanley Wells, "Shakespeare and Romance" in: *Shakespeare's Later Comedies*, ed. D. J. Palmer, pp. 117-142, p. 125.

⁹⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. with introd. and notes by Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977 rpt 1987), p. 842.

¹⁰⁰ *Cymbeline*, V.5.422.

¹⁰¹ T. S. Eliot, "Marina," p. 103.

¹⁰² S. Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, p. 2.

¹⁰³ T. S. Eliot, "Marina," p. 103.

Essentially, to enjoy the crown of life one must endure a "crown of grief," sea-sorrows altering in sea-changes.¹⁰⁴ Yet one should not imagine that any safety attained is sustained. As freedom springs only from incarceration, so are ceremonies of reunion facilitated by and hence conditional upon chaotic dissolutions. In plays Coleridge perceived as mingling the superlatively gay and sad, joys themselves can be tempests and great seas, contending in Paulina, or rendering Miranda foolish.¹⁰⁵ And *Henry VIII* will not permit this to be forgotten:

I come no more to make you laugh; . . .
 Be sad, as we would make ye. . . .
 And if you can be merry then, I'll say
 A man may weep upon his wedding-day.¹⁰⁶

Like other inhabitants of historical courts where things are "now best, now worst"¹⁰⁷ Wolsey, like Hal or Hermione, is aware of the consequences of the jeopardies he is in:

So much fairer
 And spotless shall mine innocence arise,
 When the King knows my truth.¹⁰⁸

In storms of state, uproars, loud rebellions, sudden angers and wild seas of conscience, clear suns darken. Princes swell and grow terrible. Tempests dash the garments of "this peace,"¹⁰⁹ shattering the melodies Philharmonus perceives, and, perhaps, subsequently, any accounts of literary patterning, progression and culmination. The tribulations of many more are apt to accuse the structures of only ever seeming certainty and conclusion.

Even if *Henry VIII* did not succeed and qualify earlier late plays, its prologue succinctly articulates that that which is happily consolidated can be made insecure again. If there is development, it is towards the refutation of finalizing consumation. As tragedy survived in later plays, themselves voicing silences and varieties of receptions, so closure is resisted in the account of the birth of a Queen, whose anticipated settlement is already dead. In this regard, to emphasise the significance of a particular stylistic mode or process, which seems to offer a way of approaching and ordering a variety of aspects of numerous plays (as in this account of processes of

¹⁰⁴ *Cymbeline*, I.6.4.

¹⁰⁵ S. T. Coleridge, "This almost miraculous play" in: D. J. Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-381; *The Winter's Tale*, V.2.67-76; *The Tempest*, III.1.73-74.

¹⁰⁶ *Henry VIII*, in: *Complete Works*, Prologue.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I.1.29.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, III.2.300-302.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, I.1.93.

jeopardy and consolidation) may be as self-contradictory as that which is studied, a subject not given to definitive, absolute, static, systematisation, as it is simultaneously, paradoxically, frequently and consistently phrased as self-supporting and stable aphorism (see the title of this essay). Yet, or thus, "paradox equivocates." One "meaning must always be taken with respect to" another, all "literally, speculative," "meanings infinitely mirrored, infinitely reflected, in each other."¹¹⁰ Paradox performs reflexive mediation between dependent participles. Admitting the impossibility of easy conclusion shadows a comprehension of the true, dazzling, indefinitions of the processes perceived.

The paradoxical procedures of these Shakespearean plays, the ways in which things are lost to be found, mocking modes of jeopardy consolidating structures challenged, derided and imitated, and the fashions whereby theatre wilfully reveals its conceits, are the work of a supreme mediator. Only the "confident", cautiously mindful of the vagaries to which their creations – like all offsprings in these plays – may be subjected, can "contemplate paradoxes in the first place, and only the most secure technicians can accept" the challenges, risks and jeopardies, consolidated in expressions vibrant with a faith in journeys yet unmade.¹¹¹

This form, this face this life
 Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.¹¹²

Department of English Literature and Culture
 University of Łódź

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¹¹⁰ Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

¹¹² T. S. Eliot, "Marina," p. 104.

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