Introduction

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This is a cold beginning (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, 3.5.103)

The range of significant changes that took place in the year 1607, both personally and financially for Shakespeare, and socially and economically for the people of London and England (actors, audience, authors), mark 1608 as a time when changing circumstances presented the opportunity for Shakespeare to revisit his *modus operandi*. While it is, of course, impossible to ascertain a more than tenuous break in Shakespeare's dramatic output during his long career, this moment has seemed to many, for diverse reasons, to be as close to a watershed as can be discerned.[1]

In late spring 1607, there was widespread rioting in the English Midlands (often referred to as the Midland Revolt or the Levellers' riots) with protests against the enclosure of previously held common land for large-scale sheep farming. The effect of these enclosures (beyond reduced self-sufficiency at a local level) was that less land was now available for cereal farming, and after a bad winter in 1606–7 this foretold worsening countrywide grain shortages.[2] In London, these anticipated hardships were exacerbated by recurrent outbreaks of plagues. On 12 April 1607, the Lord Mayor, Sir Henry Rowe, wrote to the Lord Chamberlain, Thomas Howard, first Earl of Suffolk, requesting that playing in the theatres be restrained on account of the plague.[3] By 9 July the weekly mortality rates from the plague in London exceeded the limit of thirty that meant automatic restraint came into effect.[4] Indeed, the figures published in the weekly plague bills did not drop below acceptable levels until the week of 19 November.[5] From 8 December, extremely cold weather conditions set in and the Thames was frozen over for an extended period, famously recorded in Thomas Dekker's pamphlet, 'The Great Frost. Cold doings in London'.[6] The plague restrictions that meant that the theatres remained closed for much of the following playing season suggest that the new year began with difficulty for players and poet alike, but soon

new opportunities presented themselves that would mitigate against these severe circumstances.

In March 1608, the uproar following a performance of a play by the child actors of the Blackfriars Children (formerly the Children of the Chapel Royal, later the Children of the Queen's Revels) proved oddly beneficial to the King's Men. The caricaturing of the French king in George Chapman's *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* caused considerable offence to the attending French ambassador.[7] The Blackfriars indoor theatre had been in the Burbage family since 1596 (when James Burbage purchased it) but owing in part to a local prohibition on adult players performing at Blackfriars the playing space had been leased out on a twenty-one-year contract.[8] The *Byron* scandal meant that this lease was terminated by mutual consent, leaving the theatre open for use by Burbage and the King's Men. James I's displeasure at the furore caused all theatres to be closed for a time.[9] However, the opportunity for the King's Men to move their enterprise indoors to the Blackfriars theatre became a reality in early August 1608, when a new lease was signed. It is not simply for the playing space, however, that this move was significant, for during another year of plague the Blackfriars players were allowed to practise privately for about eight weeks during the winter.[10] The extensiveness of plague closures in recent years also meant that in 1608 there was a loosening of the restrictions on the King's Men (i.e. an adult company) using this space.[11] The first grant of permission for the King's Men in this period explicitly refers to their practice in preparation for court performances.[12] Also in this period, following the disbandment of the Blackfriars Children, two young actors from that company, Underwood and Ostler, became available to augment the King's Men. They joined the adult company at some point between the offence caused by *Byron*, in which they had performed, and the first performance of Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* in 1610, where they are listed among the 'principal actors'.[13] The death of William Sly (a distinguished company actor and sharer) on 16 August 1608 also irrevocably altered the make-up of the King's Men.

Briefly, in terms of outside influences on the performances of Shakespeare's company, London was still reeling from the repercussions of the Levellers' riots the previous year and its citizens faced widespread food shortages and further hardships in the form of the great winter freeze (1607–8), while plague mortality rates forced the closure of the theatres for much of 1607 and early 1608 (further to James I's *Byron* prohibition). In addition, it was a period of significant change for the playing company

itself, with the advent of performances at Blackfriars, and a change in personnel.

For Shakespeare, there were also pertinent biographical factors that mark out this period as one of change. He appears to have had a busy schedule of personal affairs to attend to in both Stratford-Upon-Avon and London. On 5 June 1607, his daughter Susanna married John Hall in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. Later that summer in London, Edward, the (illegitimate) son of Edmund Shakespeare, the playwright's younger brother was buried on 12 August. During the following winter, Edmund followed his son to the grave and was buried in St Saviour's Church, Southwark, and at some expense to Shakespeare.[14] Early in 1608, Shakespeare became a grandfather for the first time; Elizabeth Hall was baptised at the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-Upon-Avon on 21 February. Late 1608 was marked by tragedy, with the death of Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother, before 9 September 1608 (her burial date).

LATE CRITICISM

… weighing well the end (*The Winter's Tale*, 1.2.255)

The above historical narrative is not, of course, free from critical problems. Choosing a break, and the traditional one of 1607–8, might seem to suggest a viewpoint that promotes (with the 'caesura critics', as Gordon McMullan has called them) the last phase as a new and final flourish that springs from a moment of realisation that death or retirement is approaching, and that is most often imagined in Prospero's final scene of *The Tempest* (see McMullan, *Late*, esp. pp. 65–125). However, this viewpoint is incompatible with the reality that Shakespeare writes a further three plays in collaboration with John Fletcher (including the lost *Cardenio*). The alternative, of seeing the plays from this period (as the 'continuity critics' do, again borrowing McMullan's term) as the necessary conclusion to an ongoing process of artistic refinement (culminating, again, most regularly in *The Tempest*), is again unsatisfactory when we consider the change in writing and performance conditions for the playwright. Rather, we see this break not in a traditional historicist way as some isolated artistic moment of epiphany for Shakespeare but as a practical historical hiatus (in 1607–8) in the productivity (if not of actual writing then at least in the literal sense of production) of the playwright. To ignore the changes in the practical conditions of writing and performance at this moment in Shakespeare's career would seem to be as

major an omission as to ignore the plays that are customarily excluded from discussion of the 'late romances' (i.e. *Coriolanus* and *King Henry VIII*, and routinely also *The Two Noble Kinsmen*). Employing the term 'romance' is less problematic once a full consideration has been granted to those other late plays that do not fall under the remit of this subcategory. That both 'caesura' and 'continuity' critics alike have tended to group these 'romances' against best-established chronology to the exclusion of *Coriolanus* is one significant facet of the prevailing narratives that this volume seeks to redress. The other, perhaps even more significant, adjustment that the volume makes to the traditional grouping is to include the final two extant plays that Shakespeare wrote in collaboration with John Fletcher. 'Continuity' and 'caesura' critics have both tended to exclude these works, offering instead a romantic, but inaccurate, conclusion to Shakespeare's working life.

In recent times, these final productive years of Shakespeare's life have attracted significant critical attention in Shakespearean studies. This interest has focused on identifying a distinctive shift in the playwright's style and interests in his later plays. Traditionally, critics of late Shakespeare have focused upon certain trends, such as the author's return to the Romance genre, and certain themes, such as separation, rejuvenation and reconciliation, or have focused exclusively on his return to collaborative writing. In terms of genre theory, specifically Romance, Robert M. Adams's *Shakespeare: The Four Romances* (Norton, 1989) and Helen Cooper's *The English Romance in Time* (Oxford University Press, 2004) have been particularly influential. With regard to detailing discernible shifts in style, Simon Palfrey's *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford University Press, 1997) and Russ McDonald's *Shakespeare's Late Style* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) have made the most significant contributions. Regarding Shakespeare's collaborative work, Kenneth Muir's *Shakespeare as Collaborator* (Methuen, 1960), Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope's collection *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After* (Routledge, 1992), Jonathan Hope's *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), Brian Vickers's *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and sections of John Jowett's *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford University Press, 2007) have also had a significant effect on how we think about the methodologies of co-authorship in Shakespeare's late collaborations.

While these works of criticism have been invaluable to the student of late Shakespearean drama, the prioritisation of an overriding critical

agenda, unifying motif, or consistent set of structural or stylistic features has most often necessitated a fragmented, or at best an incomplete, approach to the late corpus. In seeking a unifying theme, trend or practice, other authors and editors have attempted to establish a canon of late plays (or subsets within that group) around distinctive motifs. While the study of the later plays has benefited from the identification of such patterns, the clarity of distinctions made is somewhat blurred once the entire corpus of Shakespeare's final productive years is considered as a whole. Eschewing a separation of what are nominally entitled 'romances' or 'tragicomedies' to the exclusion of *Coriolanus* and *King Henry VIII*, or a separation of the 'collaborations' at the expense of the rest of the later plays, this volume provides chronologically ordered essays on each of the extant late Shakespearean plays and collaborations from 1608 until 1613.

The volume, then, aims to avoid an exclusionist agenda, or an assertion of critical prerogative, beyond the reasonable (and conventional) critical assumptions that first, 1607–8 seems an identifiable watershed for the playwright for those professional and personal reasons enumerated above, and second, Shakespeare wrote or co-authored this set of (not always compatible) plays over a period of six to seven years at the end of his writing career. This approach provides a platform for original critical readings based on a more expansive approach to those plays *actually* constituting Shakespeare's late corpus. The substitution of an expansive group, though often markedly disjointed in terms of genre and authorship (taking as our province the final seven extant plays), for one or more of the happily harmonious selections (romances, tragicomedies, collaborations) is, we believe, a more accurate means of assessing Shakespeare's late oeuvre than to draw conclusions from a selective, and most likely anachronistic, grouping.

Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613 also builds upon Gordon McMullan's work on 'discourse of lateness' in *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). McMullan challenges the critical assumptions that accompany the concept of 'late authorship' and, in questioning the traditional approaches to this concept, highlights a critical tendency to focus on the poetics of the later plays even during the prevalence of New Historicist and Cultural Materialist critical trends in recent decades: a prioritisation of the late plays in terms of stylistic mastery at the closing, and by implication high point, of a career. The resultant focus on aesthetics of style as a means of defining and analysing the later plays, while extremely valuable in its own way (particularly in the recent work

of Russ McDonald), has traditionally led to an imbalance in the treatment of these plays in terms of cultural and historical context. The second part of this volume seeks to address this critical lacuna by providing a set of essays on contextual and thematic issues specifically relevant to the final time period in which the playwright was working: from print and performance culture, to city life, to politics and religion.

There have also been significant collections of essays on the late work in recent years. *Shakespeare's Late Plays*, ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan (Longman, 1999), *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. Stephen W. Smith and Travis Curtwright (Lexington, 2002), *Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. Alison Thorne (Macmillan, 2003) and, most recently, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge University Press, 2009) stand out among the collections of the last decade or so. However, to date no single volume exists that treats all seven extant plays in their historical, material and social contexts at the final stage in Shakespeare's career. This volume seeks to fill that absence and to address the two greatest deficiencies of current critical material: the lack of an inclusive chronological treatment of all the extant plays of the late period, and the failure to deliberately contextualise the plays in question. While previous collections have offered some contextual exploration of one play or another, this book offers a more expansive approach and a more comprehensive situation of the late corpus. By re-addressing the traditional narrative of Shakespeare's final years, this volume enables new readings of the final seven extant plays in a more satisfyingly complete late Shakespearean canon.

I

> The words of your commission
> Will tie you to the numbers and the time
> Of their dispatch.
>
> (*Cymbeline*, 3.7.13)

Focusing on the final six years of Shakespeare's career as playwright (1608–13) and moving from *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, seven plays are considered in this volume as constituting the late canon. To begin with *Pericles*, rather than *Coriolanus*, strikes us as a sensible choice for a volume on Shakespeare's late plays. While the dates for the play's composition and first performance are uncertain, critical consensus recommends a date of first performance in the early months of 1608, although

it may have been written during the long closure of the theatres due to plague between July and November of 1607.[15] In the opening chapter of the volume, Andrew Hiscock remarks upon the Venetian Envoy Zorzi Giustinian's attendance of the play in the company of the French ambassador de la Boderie and his wife. Since they paid for admission (not a court performance) and both parties were only in the country together during a specific temporal window, a time during the first six months of 1608 seems most likely for this performance.[16] Highlighting a later court performance at Whitehall, Hiscock observes that the play was 'catering for elite consumption from the very beginning of its stage life' (p. 17).

Hiscock's chapter directs our attention to Shakespeare's use of character, dumbshow, spectacle and ellipsis in *Pericles*, and argues for the play's obsessive concern 'with the exercise of *narratio*'. In doing so, the chapter examines 'the recurring critical determination to view *Pericles* as insufficient, erratic [and] fractured', but alerts us to how the play's 'chronological architecture invites audiences to organise their interpretative journey', and pays particular attention to 'cultural performances of silence and withdrawal' in the play, to the form and function of the choric figure, Gower, and to the play's focus on dramatic spectacles, allegory and repeated 'bids for narrative power assertion' by a number of the play's figures (p. 32).

The winter freeze of 1607–8, alluded to in *Coriolanus*, provides an *early* limit for this play in the first performance window (perhaps as early as March, before the *Byron* scandal saw all theatres closed, or after this closure and before the plague again forced theatre closure in July).[17] In the second chapter, David George connects *Pericles* and *Coriolanus* at the beginning of this phase of writing. In discussing the diverse source materials the playwright may have used in his reconstruction of Rome in *Coriolanus*, George identifies the Braun and Hogenberg map and Philemon Holland's 'Topographie' (appended to his edition of Livy's *Romane Historie* of 1600) as sources for Shakespeare's topographical landscape. Following an analysis of the political processes that evolve in the play, and then observing how Shakespeare differs from Plutarch in his characterisation of the protagonist, George moves to consider the play in the light of Shakespeare's preceding work, *Pericles*, but also those plays that are written immediately after, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Presenting the plays chronologically has its own problems, not least the instability of the chronology itself, resting (as the dating often does) on speculative best guesses. McMullan observes that after *Pericles* in 1608

(though he does not include *Coriolanus*) 'it is not impossible that over the next couple of years Shakespeare wrote his subsequent three plays in the order *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* or, alternatively, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*' (McMullan, *Late*, 79). Nonetheless, asserting the value of the historical and material contexts of the late plays as a group necessitates a certain attempt to order those plays within that history. While distancing ourselves from the traditional approach to dating these three plays based on any implication that there is a progression towards perfecting an ending that is *The Tempest*, we have found that the best chronology we can establish is the traditional one. And they are thus ordered in this sequence with the following caveat: that although this conventional pattern fits the traditional narrative, it is not enough alone to support it.

The relationship of *Cymbeline* to Fletcher's *Philaster* (*c.* 1609) and Heywood's *The Golden Age* (late 1610 to early 1611) is by no means certain, with *Philaster* offering a probable early date and *The Golden Age* a possible later one.[18] The investiture of Henry Stuart as Prince of Wales on 5 June 1610 is a more dependable historical marker, but the relevance of this date to Shakespeare's selection and use of material is less clear. Similarly, the assassination of Henri IV of France on 4 May 1610 and James I's response to it (including a proclamation revoking licences of non-resident Catholics in London on 2 June which incorporated a command for the re-administration of the Oath of Allegiance) are satisfactorily identifiable markers. How or if these events and issues directly influence what Shakespeare wrote is by no means certain, but the prominence of Welsh themes (and the importance of Milford Haven) along with the apparent allusion to the oath by Iachimo (1.6.100–1) appear to indicate that the play was being readied for production at the end of 1610. Taking into account the enforced closure of the public playhouses from June to December because of plague mortality rates, the play was perhaps among the fifteen unspecified performances played that Christmas season at court.[19]

In the third chapter, Raphael Lyne examines recognition scenes in *Cymbeline*, and in the late plays more generally, from a modern scientific viewpoint to gain a fresh perspective on the 'creativity, hope and joy' that seem to be such strong forces in the late plays, and in the 'romances' in particular (p. 62). His discussion of the flawed perception inherent in recognition scenes is illuminated particularly by the use of the theory of 'confirmation bias'. Lyne examines three key scenes in *Cymbeline* (the King meets his long-lost sons; Innogen unwittingly meets her brothers;

Innogen misrecognises Cloten's dead body) that expose the problems of recognising people in a way that is itself almost experimental – as daring drama, and (analogous with the design of scientific experiments) as a means of questioning and exploring the ways in which humans know one another. Lyne's discussion of Innogen's false recognition towards the close of the chapter partially prefigures William E. Engel's treatment of emblems in suggesting that she 'interpret[s] the scene before her like an allegorical picture (an emblem of earthly pleasures counterpointed with the frailty of the flesh), and musing on true things she can hardly believe' (p. 66).

The record of Simon Forman's visit to the Globe for a performance of *The Winter's Tale* indicates that it cannot have been written later than 15 May 1611. The revival of *Mucedorus*, with its expanded 'bear scene', by the King's Men on 18 February 1610 is complicated in terms of what it means for the early dating of Shakespeare's play. Did the company revive *Mucedorus* based on the success of *The Winter's Tale* or did the success of the revived play inspire Shakespeare to make use of it in writing *The Winter's Tale*? The positioning of the chapter on this play in the volume should indicate that we favour the latter opinion, while again accepting that it is far from certain. The other production that seems to support this view was of Jonson's *Masque of Oberon* (*Oberon, the Faery Prince*), performed at court on 1 January 1611. Its relationship to the dance in act 4 of *The Winter's Tale* seems suggestive of influence, though again the possibility that this is a later addition complicates the matter.[20] In brief, the evidence seems to favour a dating that makes the performance that Simon Forman attended in May 1611 an early one.[21]

William E. Engel's chapter on *The Winter's Tale* proposes a reading of the statue scene (5.3.) in terms of the memory-training tradition. Highlighting how Shakespeare draws on commonplaces of theurgic and mythopoetic possibilities, Engel also notes similar kinetic memory images in *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and suggests that '[w]hat logic there is to be found in the denouement of *The Winter's Tale* is the logic of the Memory Theatre' (p. 72). Observing the Kings Men's use of the Blackfriars theatre from 1608 to 1609, Engel compares the marmoreal likeness of Hermione to the hyperrealism of Spanish painted sculptures of saints, and suggests that the participatory quasi-religious playgoer response elicited from such a painted statue may have drawn on the 'principles and practices of cutting-edge baroque artifice' (p. 80).

The Tempest was certainly performed at court on Hallowmas night (1 November) in 1611, and uses material relating to the shipwreck in the

Bermudas of Sir Thomas Gates unavailable before the latter part of 1610.[22] That Simon Forman saw *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* before he died on 8 September 1611 is hardly persuasive evidence that *The Tempest* was not already in existence before this first record of its performance, but without any indication of an earlier date we have placed it after *The Winter's Tale* in this volume, while sharing David Lindley's concern with seeing the play as 'the grand finale to a writing life'.[23]

Michael Neill's chapter on *The Tempest* focuses upon Shakespeare's innovative use of silences, and also explores comparative uses of aural effects in his other late plays. Neill highlights practical effects such as incomplete line-endings in the play's meter, dialogue pauses and notable absences of musical accompaniment, as well as examining how wonder is repeatedly expressed through silence in the text. Neill's chapter thus describes Shakespeare's sensitivity to the use of sound and the playwright's careful management of the aural backdrop to his final plays.

The order of Shakespeare's final two plays (three if we include the lost *Cardenio*) is less complicated but again not entirely certain. *King Henry VIII* was a 'new play' (according to Sir Henry Wotton's letter describing the fire) when the Globe playhouse was burned down during a performance on 29 June 1613, while Henry Bluett's account of the fire records that the play had not been performed more than '2 or 3 times before' (see McMullan, *H8*, pp. 9, 57–60).[24] Rory Loughnane's chapter recalls Andrew Hiscock's discussion of the choric device of Gower in *Pericles*, and traces a series of Shakespeare's uses of choruses and characters that provide an intra-play semi-choric function. Loughnane demonstrates that these devices are a commonplace feature of Shakespeare's late plays, and how in *Henry VIII* they serve particularly to alert playgoers to equivocal interpretations of the evident ambiguities in the historical narrative.

The use of the morris dance in act 3 scene 5 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* from Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* (performed on 20 February 1613 as part of the Princess Elizabeth's marriage festivities) places *The Two Noble Kinsmen* after this masque was written (most likely in the first months of 1613). The later limit, to which it seems closer, is indicated by what seems most likely to be a reference to the play in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, first performed on 31 October 1614.[25] The reference in the prologue to 'our losses' may suggest the recent burning of the Globe on 29 June 1613, and the reference to a 'dull time' probably helps to narrow down the dating of the play even further to the winter of 1613–14 (see Potter, pp. 34–5).