

# SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF  
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY AND PRODUCTION

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EDITED BY  
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON · NEW YORK · MELBOURNE

Published by the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB  
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA  
296 Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park, Melbourne 3206, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1976

ISBN: 0 521 21227 8

First published 1976

*Shakespeare Survey* was first published in 1948. For the first eighteen volumes it was edited by Allardyce Nicoll under the sponsorship of the University of Birmingham, the University of Manchester, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Printed in Great Britain  
at the  
University Printing House, Cambridge  
(Euan Phillips, University Printer)

*The Library of Congress originally catalogued Vol. I of this series as follows:*

Shakespeare Survey; an annual survey of Shakespearian study & production. 1—  
Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1948—

v. illus., facsim. 26 cm.

Editor: v. 1— Allardyce Nicoll.

'Issued under the sponsorship of the University of Birmingham, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.'

1. Shakespeare, William — Societies, periodicals, etc. 2. Shakespeare, William — Criticism and interpretation. 3. Shakespeare, William — Stage history. 1. Nicoll, Allardyce, 1894— ed.

PR2888.C3 822.33 49-1639

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# SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES SINCE 1958: A RETROSPECT

F. DAVID HOENIGER

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In his review in 1958 of trends in the critical response to the Romances (*Shakespeare Survey* 11, 1958) Philip Edwards concluded that we had heard enough about their universality, and boldly called for more 'mundane' studies. Many though not all have followed his counsel since; so much so indeed that some may have forgotten how much we owe the current wave of enthusiasm for the Romances to T. S. Eliot and G. Wilson Knight. However perverse or 'trite' (Edwards's word) the universalisers sometimes were, they did stimulate and certainly never hurt anyone. Recent decades have likewise seen many well-received performances of several of the Romances, though *Cymbeline* remains puzzling to both critics and producers (who therefore seldom risk it), and it is curious how seldom *Henry VIII* is staged nowadays, considering how popular the play was until fifty years ago.

My survey will attempt to give recent 'mundane' studies the due they deserve but not confine itself to them. But it both should and must be selective. Too much writing on the Romances has anyhow been repetitious or supererogatory, and whoever wishes could write an article on six different recent views of how exactly we should respond, step by step, to the first half of I, ii, or to the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*. Much is omitted deliberately or hesitantly, though my readers may well wish I had omitted more. I have no room to deal with bibliographical studies or problems of authorship. I will refer seldom to *Henry VIII*

and, very reluctantly, not at all to *Cardenio*, the seventh of the Romances Shakespeare was involved with, nor to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, where Shakespeare yet once more explored fresh directions and emphases, well pointed out in three recent essays by Philip Edwards (*Review of English Literature*, October 1964), Richard Proudfoot (in *Later Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 8, 1966), and Clifford Leech (Introduction, Signet edn., 1966). The divisions of this survey, while sometimes perhaps suggesting a wrong emphasis for certain writings, will, I hope, be found convenient.

## *Influence of coterie theatre, Blackfriars, masque, music*

In their comments on these familiar subjects, recent critics have either concentrated on fresh data or reacted to extreme earlier views. While Shakespeare's use of masque-like devices in the Romances can hardly be debatable, and we can readily assume that his audiences welcomed them, few now would claim as great an influence of court masques even on *The Tempest* as Enid Welsford did. Nosworthy (*Arden Cymbeline*, 1955) points to the lack of gravity and paucity of content of court masques, and to their fundamental unlikeness to drama. He asks rhetorically why Shakespeare, if he was so much taken with the new form, never wrote a court masque. Such an extreme reaction is healthy though, as Fitzroy Pyle reminds us in an appendix to his *The Winter's Tale: A*

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*Commentary on the Structure* (1969), few other plays around 1610 show as much influence of the masque as some of Shakespeare's Romances. While considering this subject, we surely need to keep in mind the whole context of experimentation with new devices and forms – in drama, sculpture, architecture, music, and so on. Opera made its beginnings then, and *The Tempest* has a kinship to *The Magic Flute*. Inigo Jones's stage devices for the court masque, however original, were in the air; and masque-like effects were used much earlier than 1610 by dramatists writing for both public and private theatres.

In spite of Sternfeld's splendid work on music in Shakespearian drama, and discoveries by Cutts and others, little of direct bearing on musical effects in the last plays has in recent years been added to our knowledge. Moreover, we remain crucially ignorant about how music contributed to the mood or effect of plays, for instance Marston's, in the coterie theatres before Shakespeare's company took over Blackfriars. But we should always welcome comments by those few scholars expert in both music and drama, like R. W. Ingram's 'Musical Pauses and the Vision Scenes in Shakespeare's Last Plays' (*Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare*, Eugene, Oregon, 1966), who likens the verse in the Jupiter episode in *Cymbeline* to that of operatic libretti. Gower in *Pericles* has in recent years been staged more than once as chanting his 'song', and I mentioned in my Arden edition that both Pericles and Marina are musicians. Nosworthy has provided a useful list of musical effects in the four Romances, and comments: 'Each of the Romances is an advance upon its immediate predecessor, philosophically as well as technically, and music comes to occupy a conspicuous and effective position in the moral and metaphysical fabric' (*Shakespeare Survey* 11, p. 68). And in a sanely balanced comment Pyle suggests that 'Without the musical tradi-

tion of Blackfriars to draw on, *The Tempest* and the long fourth act of *The Winter's Tale* could hardly have been written as they were written. The point is of obvious critical value, but particular rather than general. It does not account for the distinctive tone of the last plays' (p. 180). To which one can add, for the tone of *Pericles* indeed not.

Bentley's well-known thesis that Shakespeare planned the Romances specifically for Blackfriars was answered by Edwards but the issue remains alive. Some point to *Pericles* and to the performances at the Globe Simon Forman saw. Others see no likeness between the very popular nature of Shakespeare's comedies, early and late, and almost anything that was staged at Blackfriars before Shakespeare's company took it over. One might ask how much in essence Beethoven's music was affected by the invention of new instruments, but the answer is: surely to some extent. Others have been more respectful towards Bentley's view, allowing some importance to practical considerations (different theatre and audience) in a dramatist who besides writing 'for himself' appears to have been interested in real estate and in making money, and to have treated his audiences consistently gently. But careful critics emphasise how little we know about fundamental facts, how small the evidence is for supporting Bentley's or a different thesis. That is the subject of Daniel Seltzer's thorough, however negative, chapter on 'The Staging of the Last Plays' (in *Later Shakespeare*). We theorize about acting styles, lighting in Jacobean theatres, etc: we know next to nothing. Seltzer indicates a laborious route by which we can come to know a little more. But the results would not amount to safe evidence for broad conclusions.

Related is the subject of the influence on Shakespeare's Romances of coterie drama. Here speculation has been rife but again, safe evidence is hard to come by, and

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counter-arguments are easily raised. All is rather quiet today on the front of Beaumont and Fletcher whose *Philaster* may after all have been produced after *Cymbeline*, and attention has concentrated on Marston. Some recent critics have sought in Marston's earlier drama the origins for the histrionics and exhibited 'artlessness' of Shakespeare's last plays, especially *Cymbeline*; the techniques of distancing characters, their Brechtian 'Verfremdungseffekt'. And for *Cymbeline* at least the approach deserves a welcome, like any from a fresh direction that helps enlighten us about that particular, puzzling play. R. A. Foakes (see p. 8) was in part anticipated by Arthur Kirsch (*English Literary History* 34, 1967) who suggests that in *Cymbeline* Shakespeare's genius 'is less distractingly present' thus allowing us to see in it better than in the other Romances the influence on them of the dramaturgical movement in the private theatres. Comparing and contrasting *The Malcontent* and *Cymbeline* as experimental tragi-comedies, Kirsch suggests how Shakespeare exploits in *Cymbeline* 'the deeper paradoxes of such tragi-comedy through the imagery'. This may be pertinent however much we should recall that Marston never wrote popular drama. If Shakespeare after 1600 learned anything from a contemporary about dramatic experimentation, Marston is a worthy candidate. Only let us remember the remarkable independence of other artists of genius in their later work.

### *Emblematic plays complimenting Stuart royalty*

It is one thing to stipulate that Shakespeare planned the Romances for Blackfriars, quite another to assert that he designed them for special occasions at court. Glynne Wickham differentiates the 'emblematic play', a term familiar in discussions of some medieval drama and Calderón, from allegory and parable. Emblematic plays often take the form of

romance, but in them 'references to factual matters of a topical nature have been inserted'. What reaches the eye in them is purely pleasurable, but what reached the understanding of original audiences 'usually takes the form of moral or political instruction' (*The Elizabethan Theatre III*, Toronto, 1973, p. 85). In more than one article Wickham has suggested that all of the Romances are in this sense emblematic, but as the case made is quite unconvincing except perhaps for *Cymbeline*, I will confine myself to that play.

In several articles by others who in part anticipate Wickham's views on *Cymbeline*, not only contemporary history and royalty but also ancient British history and more are involved. Long ago Northrop Frye intimated that Christ was born during Cymbeline's reign. Then Philip Brockbank suggested (in *Shakespeare Survey* 11) that different parts of the history of ancient Britain which Shakespeare drew upon for *Cymbeline* may prove relevant to the play's interpretation. Responding to these clues, Robin Moffet proposed in 'Cymbeline and the Nativity' (*Shakespeare Quarterly* XIII, 1962) that the play's action, moving as it does through confusion and paradox to unity and self-knowledge in humility, hints at the Christian revelation which lies just beyond. His argument is presented cautiously and with good detail. Similarly reserved about the play's merits was Emrys Jones who in 'Stuart Cymbeline' (*Essays in Criticism* 11, 1961; in Palmer, D. J. ed., *Shakespeare's Later Comedies*, Harmondsworth, 1971) linked the play's ending to the *pax Romana* under Augustus on the one hand, and to King James' motto as *Beata pacifici* on the other, also drawing attention to the rich association of Milford Haven for King James and his family. Next, Bernard Harris in 'What's past is Prologue' (*Later Shakespeare*, 1966) added further data to those of Brockbank, Moffet and Jones, emphasising contemporary references to Christ's birth in

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Cymbeline's reign and how in Daniel's masque of 1610, Queen Anne herself in the part of Tethys referred to Milford Haven; the article moves on to the *Pastor Fido* and other matters. Finally, Glynne Wickham presented Jones's view all anew, but specifically claimed that *Cymbeline* was composed for the occasion of Prince Henry's investiture as Prince of Wales in June 1610 (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1969, and elsewhere).

Lovely material and speculation all this, about which Hallett Smith is excessively unkind in an appendix to his *Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino, Calif., 1972) where he quotes, for instance, a Spanish admiral on the suitability of Milford Haven for invading Britain, and repeats the old truth, too often forgotten, that no shred of external evidence exists for a single play of Shakespeare's time that it was devised for a special occasion or court performance. Wickham makes much of Shakespeare having been a Groom of the royal chamber, and of King James as patron of Shakespeare's company. But others have indicated that James talked more about peace-making than he acted, and that he was not a popular king. To infer anything about plays from compliments in masques is anyhow dubious. Cymbeline and his Queen hardly suit a play which wants to compliment royalty. Yet we had better keep an open mind for, as Geoffrey Bullough tells us, Shakespeare's use of the Scottish story of Hay and his two sons, who in battle against the Danes turned defeat into victory, looks like a tribute to one of the King's oldest friends, Sir James Hay. 'The King and his courtiers would recognise the Hay ancestry in the feat of Belarius and the two boys' (*Drama and Narrative Sources* 8, 1975, pp. 11-12).

### *Sources and romance*

Twenty years ago scoffing at source studies was fashionable, now they are welcomed. In

*The Winter's Tale*, writes Fitzroy Pyle, 'a single book stands out as having been the constant object of the writer's attention in the act of composition' (p. x); so one should pay it attention. Two major works which happen to fit the dates of my survey neatly, provide a model: Kenneth Muir's *Shakespeare's Sources*, 1957; and the eighth and final volume, devoted to the Romances, of Geoffrey Bullough's monumental work, 1975. While some may still wonder about the reasons for the painstaking work that went into these books, inferences for the interpretation of the plays will be clear to those who read them.

By the time Edwards wrote in 1958 scholars had become aware of the need for a better understanding both of the general nature of romance in the forms that reached Shakespeare and of how he moulded it into the unique shape and content of his last plays. Danby had looked closely at Sidney and Montemayor in relation to Beaumont and Fletcher's and Shakespeare's plays. Later Northrop Frye (see pp. 9-10) was to investigate and reflect further on conventions of romantic comedy. But quite a number of recent critics have concentrated on re-examining Greene's prose romance *Pandosto* and the very different play Shakespeare developed from it, *The Winter's Tale*; among them Pafford (Arden edn. 1963), Pyle, and others. How illuminating such an approach can be is shown especially by John Lawlor (*Philological Quarterly* 41, 1962; in Palmer) and by Stanley Wells (in *Later Shakespeare*), neither of whom limits himself to discussing significant changes Shakespeare made. By documenting as he does the great popularity of *Pandosto*, Wells may imply that Shakespeare could count on his audience's awareness of how he changed it. Parts of Greene's tale were made by him more 'wondrous', others more intense or 'realistic'. Lawlor comments on why Shakespeare brings young and old together already in Act IV, and observes:



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If the writer of dramatic romance is to penetrate our deeper consciousness, he must not allow us to remain merely vigilant about man as agent, alert to connect act and consequence. Against that, he must show us the direction of counter-movement, including the scope of fortunate accident. But, much more important, we must encounter for ourselves the quality of a union between human beings which, cutting across all separate categorizations, is felt as itself an instance, and the highest instance, of 'great creating Nature'.

(In Palmer, p. 309)

Similarly, one might reflect on what the origins of Autolycus and of his tricks imply for the play, the character derived from Greek mythology, his tricks from London connycatchers, but both fitted into a story of pure romance. Thus Autolycus, as some have remarked, is a timeless figure. Does he today wear the garb of the reporter who sifted through Dr Kissinger's garbage for the sake of regaling urbanised Mopsas with tales which are true? The altered medium is the same message. With *Cymbeline* such an approach is much more difficult, but Brockbank and Bullough have indicated how informative a look at details in the chronicles Shakespeare used can be, and Homer Swander (in *Pacific Coast Studies on Shakespeare*) draws larger inferences from the way Shakespeare changed Posthumus from his prototype in Boccaccio and other versions of the wager story.

For *The Tempest* Kermode's account (Arden edn.) has been followed by a veritable avalanche of detailed study and speculation about Shakespeare's use of the Bermuda or Virginia Pamphlets. With their descriptions of tempests and providential deliverance, the golden world and the brazen, colonisation and the American Indian, the impact of these documents on Shakespeare's imagination has been the subject of much writing. Kermode cautioned that we ought not to forget that *The Tempest* can be richly appreciated without any knowledge of the Bermuda pamphlets, a warning too often forgotten. I am told that in a pleasant recent

production of *The Tempest* at Williamsburg, Virginia, the effect was Mozartian, and Caliban reminded no one of North American Indians, nor Prospero of a colonising governor. And he does after all want to return to Milan. Thus one may wonder about the emphasis in the long fourth chapter of D. G. James' *The Dream of Prospero* (Oxford, 1967) which I yet found fascinating reading, troubled only by 'probabilities' which are mere surmises. But his book approaches *The Tempest* from several directions. Rewarding likewise is Leo Martz's chapter, 'Shakespeare's American Fable', in *The Machine and the Garden* (New York, 1964). Martz discusses how Shakespeare adapted many remarkable details from the Bermuda pamphlets for the play's world of conflict, strangeness and wonder, but his central interest is in major themes in American literature which *The Tempest* remarkably anticipates.

That Shakespeare also knew Richard Eden's *History of Travaile*, 1557, is discussed by Hallett Smith in *Shakespeare's Romances* (pp. 140-3). There he could read not only about Setebos but also about 'strange music' and a primitive ideal commonwealth anticipating Montaigne's. The chief relevance of voyager literature to our subject is surely that it conveyed the experience of the new world as romance and as travellers' tales true or false, inviting both faith and skepticism, a theme in the last plays. Virginia looked at first like an Arcadia; a Spaniard upon first seeing Mexico's capital stood rapt with wonder and recalled Amadis de Gaule (see Parry, *The English Reconnaissance*, Cleveland, 1963). Yet for *The Tempest*, it is time to remind ourselves of the echoes from Virgil, Ovid, and St Paul. Old voyages and 'wonder', not only new, lie behind the play.

Most of the narrative romances are such poor stuff that we are prone to doubt whether we can learn from them much about Shakespeare. That we can is indicated in the

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*Cymbeline* chapter (less elsewhere, I think) of Carol Gesner's *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1970). Gesner emphasizes that Heliodorus', and Achilles Tatius', plots of fortune or providence and their wandering heroines also included pseudo-history. Irony, mockery and paradox are employed by them in ways anticipating *Cymbeline* (my article in *Studies in English Literature*, 1962). Accounts of romance have been all too general, ignoring the vast differences in plot and characterisation and tone between Alexandrian, pastoral and chivalric romance. Of these, the last is probably least relevant for Shakespeare.

### Structure

Clifford Leech began his article on 'The Structure of the Last Plays' (*Shakespeare Survey* 11): 'The experience of time makes us aware of both cycle and crisis'. He observes that while the majority of plays concentrate on a crisis, the Romances do not, and goes on to discuss how the Romances vary among one another in combining the experience of cycle with that of crisis. *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* do so least, and are the most purely cyclic among the Romances. Beyond the play's ending, Marina and Lysimachus may well experience the blows of Fortune, and we know what was to happen to Anne Boleyn, Cromwell and the rest. Though in *Cymbeline* Shakespeare evidently took pains to produce a sense of finality in the last two scenes, it likewise, as Leech sees it, emphasizes flux. But in *The Winter's Tale*, by introducing, unlike *Pandosto*, Hermione's statue and revival, yet no longer youthful but 'wrinkled', Shakespeare superbly combined the experience of flux with that of finality, a sense of what has gone forever, not only of what is to come. And though in *The Tempest* Shakespeare from the outset concentrates on crisis, yet we are left at the play's end with a strong sense

of flux, for Prospero, no longer magician, will face new tasks, and Miranda is too innocent for what may lie in store for her. That of the five plays, the first and last should be the most purely cyclic calls for reflection.

Leech's stress on the effect of final scenes is shared by others. Patrick Swinden in *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies* (1973) writes with telling detail of Prospero's 'grudging' reconciliation after Ariel's prompting. For his view of the play's structure, he acknowledges a debt to Anne Righter (*New Penguin Tempest*, 1968) who dwells on the 'peculiar alternation between movement and stillness', on how in conversation the eyes of the play's characters seldom seem to meet, and on how the scenes convey an 'impression of self-containment'.

But again, the majority of essays have been devoted to *The Winter's Tale*, perhaps in response to earlier writers who regarded its structure as 'split'. It is not so in the view of David Young in *The Heart's Forest* (New Haven and London, 1972) though after his chapters on pastoral in *As You Like It* and anti-pastoral in *Lear*, he naturally emphasises the play's tragic and comic parts (the book incidentally includes good pages on *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*). Pyle in his work already cited draws attention to the note of serenity and hope in the opening scenes of each of the first three acts of *The Winter's Tale*, and to how they make us look forward beyond the tragic part. Ernest Schanzer (*Review of English Literature* v, no. 2, 1964; in *The Winter's Tale: A Casebook*, ed. K. Muir, 1968) lists later echoes of the play's earlier scenes and proposes Time's hourglass as an image for the play's overall form with a hinge in the middle. Inga-Stina Ewbank's article in the same journal and issue (likewise in *The Winter's Tale Casebook*) emphasizes more how Shakespeare transformed Greene's triumph of fortune into a real triumph of Time, and turned the conventional 'into a

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dramatic exploration of the manifold meanings of 'Time', as we experience them. Good detail and good sense of theatre here. Time and structure are likewise the subject of William Blissett's article (*English Literary Renaissance*, Winter 1971) where he makes still more than Ewbank of the emblematic implications of Time, Time as *tempestatas* in the play's first half, followed by Time as *temperentia*. For discussions of structure, critics have the blessing of Aristotle and the opportunity to include almost anything.

### *Unsolemn approaches and the plays in the theatre*

Shakespeare wrote for actors and the stage, and far more Shakespearians today than earlier in the century take for granted that ignoring this fact almost inevitably results in misinterpretation. And since we know how unsolemn many episodes of Shakespeare's plays are in performance, we prefer less solemn writing about them too. Shakespeare the wise philosopher is out, Shakespeare the wit and the theatre man is in. Elucidations of Shakespeare's 'epistemological' concerns of course still occur but risk being found a bore. Their authors are invited to read John Crow's 'Deadly Sins of Criticism' (*Shakespeare Quarterly* IX, 1958), a minor Dunciad on some modern responses to the Romances. Since then we have had, note the titles, Molly Mahood's *Shakespeare's Word-Play* (1957) (of which *The Winter's Tale* chapter has been reprinted in both Palmer and Muir's *Winter's Tale* Casebook) and Anne Righter's *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (1962) as well as articles on 'histrionics' and 'artlessness' in the last plays. We have indeed had a number of lists of all the references in the Romances, or in one of them, to 'play' in its various senses, to games and to acting. With puns we face of course the problem that we sometimes may see where Shakespeare hoped we would not, and with histrionics or games

the fact that Beaumont and Fletcher and Marston used them aplenty. The approach to structure has the side-result of discovering fresh echoes; e.g. Autolycus pretending that his shoulder-bone is out recalls what the bear did to Antigonus (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, New York, 1965). This is entertaining, but did the echo result from conscious design or quirks of Shakespeare's imagination?

The past twenty years have not merely seen many productions of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* but also shown how astonishingly successful and deeply moving *Pericles* can be on the stage. The title of John Russell Brown's book, *Shakespeare's Plays in Performance* (1966, Penguin edn. 1969), is characteristic of the new emphasis in our time, as is that of his chapter on 'Playing for laughs: the Last Plays' (though Brown rightly indicates that laughter is called for only here and there in the Romances). Discussions of how exactly we ought to experience specific episodes in the plays have been particularly plentiful, especially on *The Winter's Tale*. They began with Nevill Coghill's well-known article (in *Shakespeare Survey* 11, 1958) and one of the best of them is by W. H. Matchett (in *Shakespeare Survey* 22, 1969). Another favourite has been the episode in *Cymbeline* where Imogen awakens beside Cloten's headless body and takes it for her husband's, some stressing more the serious, others more the comic in the grotesque effect.

Watching the plays on stage enlightens one of effects which critics have slighted or ignored. Recent productions of *The Winter's Tale* are surely in part the cause for the current interest in Autolycus, now the subject of entire articles; and, on the other hand, for the lessened emphasis on the art and nature debate between Polixenes and Perdita. And I think I am not alone in being struck by how well audiences accept the first two acts of *Pericles*. After Gower's first chorus, we are perhaps prepared

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for a verse which does not sound like Shakespeare's but is more like what we get (see P. Brockbank, in *Shakespeare Survey* 24, 1971, p. 107). These first two acts pass by very quickly in the theatre.

But the best theatre criticism is of the kind that keeps the whole play in view, and that shows awareness that Shakespeare's art is more than mere theatre art. I recommend this passage by Michael Goldman:

A producer searching for keys to a production of *The Tempest* must begin with the atmosphere. . . . The quality of the enchantment is central, . . . The play's events are less important than the way they are felt: how they are received by the characters, how they appear to us, and how they are related to the arts of theatrical illusion in general.

(*Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama*,  
Princeton, 1972, p. 137)

### *Links with Shakespeare's earlier plays*

But now let us leave these practical concerns and take stock of some fresh suggestions on an old subject. Three matters are of primary interest: whether one can point to specific moments in earlier Shakespeare which, as it were, intimate the birth of the idea of the Romances in Shakespeare's mind (as early as *The Comedy of Errors*, then forgotten, later recalled?); whether one can do still more and trace a complete pattern of development in Shakespeare's work ending in the Romances, as Wilson Knight tried to do; and whether comparison with particular earlier plays can help us define better the peculiarity of one of the Romances. *Othello* and *Much Ado* obviously invite comparison with *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, but recently Ernest Schanzer has drawn attention to striking similarities of the imagery in *Macbeth* and in the first half of *The Winter's Tale* (New Penguin edition, 1969).

In *The Heart's Forest* (Yale, 1972) David Young contrasts Shakespeare's handling of pastoral in four plays: *As You Like It*, *Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. In *Shake-*

*speare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York, 1965) R. G. Hunter traces the genre of the comedy of forgiveness from medieval drama through the 'dark' comedies to the last plays. Northrop Frye in *A Natural Perspective* (New York, 1965) discusses the popular and half-primitive materials which mark Shakespeare's comedies from early on, but with some emphasis on the Romances. There have been further reflections on *The Comedy of Errors* and the extent to which it anticipates the Romances, by John Arthos and others. And Hallett Smith in *Shakespeare's Romances* involves some of the tragedies as well, and makes an excellent case for Shakespeare's mind beginning to conceive the idea of writing Romances as he reflected on Sidney's *Arcadia* while at work on *King Lear*.

But most interesting, I think, have been G. K. Hunter (in *Later Shakespeare*) and Reginald Foakes (*Shakespeare: The dark comedies to the last plays*, 1971) on how aspects of the art of Shakespeare's late tragedies (Hunter concentrates on these alone) and the problem plays including *Troilus* anticipate the Romances. Hunter asks whether we have been right in assuming that among the tragedies *Lear* is of chief relevance, and his own ideas will appeal to those who have wondered about the enormous shift from *Coriolanus* to *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. He writes:

Mutability is not an important theme in *Lear*, but the heroes of the last tragedies all live within its scope, though they try to outface it; the Last Plays accept it as basic and inevitable, and the natural result is a diminution in the scope of the individuals who initiate action. (p. 27)

In another passage (p. 17, note 6) Hunter asks and provides an answer to the question of how the heroines of the Romances and their caricature opposites, Dionyza and the Queen in *Cymbeline*, may be related to Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra and Volumnia.

Foakes reasons that around 1600 or 1602

## SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES SINCE 1958: A RETROSPECT

Shakespeare, perhaps inspired by Marston and Jonson, became interested in new techniques of a more distant characterisation in the dark comedies and *Troilus*, that later he adapted them to tragedy, after *Macbeth*, and then to Romance of 'celebration', with *Cymbeline* indicating best how he experimented (cf. Kirsch, p. 3). But in my view, Foakes writes better on the dark comedies and on *Cymbeline* than on the two greater Romances that were to follow. His and Hunter's speculation and analysis should stimulate further thinking and work, coming as it does from critics who are aware of most counter-questions we might wish to raise, for instance about techniques of distant characterisation in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* or Shakespeare's interest in *The Jew of Malta*.

I have no room for comment on new suggestions resulting from comparison of very late work by other dramatists and artists with the Romances – see Kenneth Muir's short book where he compares Racine and Ibsen; also Norman Rabkin's comments on Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull* and the *Holy Sinner*, in *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding*, 1967. Concentrating as they do on characteristics of very late work alone, for instance its freer forms, its 'artlessness', its characters who look back and forward, such studies can provide a corrective for some of those I have discussed. Late work by great artists is often remarkably independent.

### *Northrop Frye*

Though probably not because of his views on them, Frye is among recent critics writing on the Romances the most famous, and therefore the most infamous. Frye still likes the term 'myth', now abandoned by many, and thus appears to fit into Edwards' negative category of 'Myth, Allegory and Symbol'. Frye concentrates in his book on the conventions of popular art forms and their origins,

which Shakespeare adapted in his comedies, rather than on the individuality and unique artistry of the plays themselves – a grave omission in the view of many. And Frye irritates because he hardly ever alludes to the critical views of others, probably because he has not read them. Hallett Smith in an appendix chapter to his *Shakespeare's Romances* compiled all the thoughts and data from other critics one might ransack for the sake of denigrating the response from Frye and his followers to Shakespearian comedy and the Romances. Moreover, for all those of us who like clear guides to detailed discussion of Shakespeare's plays, *A Natural Perspective* can be singularly frustrating. I confess to being one of those who made an attempt, not without irritation, to assemble all remarks in his book with immediate bearing on each of the Romances, though aware of how Frye might chuckle at such a response – yet Frye's criticism seldom hurts a fly, an example most of us do not follow.

Now a few corrections and observations. Frye, it is true, as an undergraduate found Wilson Knight more stimulating on Shakespeare than his other teachers, and preferred Colin Still's extravagant book on *The Tempest* to numerous 'mundane' investigations. But Frye recently has stated more succinctly than others why neither *The Winter's Tale* nor *The Tempest* can possibly be allegory (e.g. Pelican edn. of *Tempest*). Secondly, when one has read through the four chapters of *A Natural Perspective* one realises that each chapter is so constructed as to end in a discussion, several pages long, of one of the Romances. The discussions are still not detailed like those by many others, but Frye may just feel that for such detailed analysis of artistry and peculiar individuality of the plays he can count on many others being only too eager to undertake the task. His own chief concern is quite different, and clear only if one approaches *A Natural*