Moral and Religious Aspects in Shakespeare's Late Romances: Pericles, Prince of Type and Cymbeline

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Introduction

This paper explores the world of Shakespeare's late romances to enable the reader to get acquainted with the moral and religious aspects that dominate the sphere of Shakespeare's late romances. Most important of all is to trace the roots related to the moral vision and the religious pattern that appear explicitly in Pericles and Cymbeline.

Shakespeare when constructing these two plays round the idea of the providential will, divine grace and forgiveness offered to the penitent, followed the scheme of the medieval author of the miracle and morality plays.

In the miracle and morality plays everything had been adopted for the purpose of moral and religious didacticism. This is obviously seen in the pattern of sin, contrition and forgiveness which Shakespeare has adopted in Pericles and Cymbeline. Shakespeare when writing these two plays knew he was writing to an audience already familiar with the mode of ethical allegory or the allegorical religious kind of drama. He employed in Pericles, for instance, archaic devices suitable to the parabolic drama to enable the audience to comprehend the moral and the religious lesson behind the story.

Pericles and Cymbeline bear some analogy to medieval and miracle plays when Shakespeare not only presents the protagonists in the process of gaining salvation, but shows the divine grace and forgiveness bestowed on the penitent after being subjected to numerous trials and undergoing a spiritual experience of rebirth .

Moral and Religious Aspects in Pericles and Cymbeline

Reading Shakespeare's late romances would provide the reader with an opportunity to see how Shakespeare was greatly influenced by the miracle and morality plays precisely when writing Pericles and Cymbeline after the pattern of the earlier medieval religious drama.

To begin with, Shakespeare in Pericles employs the archaic device of using the poet Gower as a Chorus. This traditional dramatic technique of a poet as chorus originates in the medieval religious drama especially in the saint's plays.

The Conversion of St.Paul clarifies this technique. "There the Poeta introduces and recapitulates each scene, apologizes for breaks and leaps in the action, but most importantly, acts as moral interpreter to the audience". (1)

Miracle or Saint's plays were presented on stage late into the 16th century on specefic festival days. This choric device of a poet as a chorus, not only compresses the romantic action but its main function is moralistic and didactic. Gower in Pericles is closer to the medieval poeta in his moralizing over the action he presents. What follows in the opening scene explains the choice to resurrect a dead poet and an out dated dramatic convention of using the poet as a chorus . Gower in the opening speech declares his schemes to the audience and points to the specefic occasions and dates , i.e., "ember-eves" and "holy ales" in which the miracle plays are usually performed:

"To sing a song that old was sung,
From ashes ancient Gower is come
Assuming man's infirmities,
To glad your ear, and please your eyes.
It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy ales;
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives" (2)

In the previously mentioned lines Shakespeare unfolds the main motive of the play which is resurrection and restoration. Shakespeare resurrects through the dead poet Gower a dramatic convention to surround the parabolic drama with a religious atmosphere, revered antiquity and to tell the audience through this convention the action they are about to see is a timeless parable for their spiritual regeneration.

To begin with, Pericles is subjected to severe trails when he goes on adventure seeking to wed the daughter of King Antiochus only to learn he has to solve a deadly riddle. He discovers that to solve the riddle is to die and not to solve it is also to die. So the play immediately establishes a world where all the choices have tragic consequences. Pericles in the following lines prays to the gods to assist him. He adopts romantic-religious vocabularies to express his highest aspirations to win Antiochus' daughter:

"You gods, that made me man, and sway in love,
That have inflamed desire in my breast
To taste the fruit of yon celestial tree
Or die in the adventure, be my helps,
As I am son and servant to your will"
Pericles, act1, sc.1, p.999

Antiochus' daughter is later compared by Antiochus to "Fair Hesperides, with golden fruit, but dangerous to be touched." Pericles, act1, sc.1, p.999.

Undoubtedly, this language used by Pericles and Antiochus would seem to have the echoes of temptation and fall. Antiochus' daughter whose beauty charmed Pericles, came to represent evil which tested the moral virtues embodied in Pericles.

Pericles is not sinful, yet his recognition of the incestuous relation between the father and the daughter denoted in the riddle, is presented as a kind of fall from innocence into knowledge when this knowledge jeopardizes the life of Pericles as it makes Antiochus anxious to assassinate him.

Antiochus' daughter, on the other hand, is presented as a personified abstraction rather than a character. The same can be said about Dionyza whose wickedness is revealed when she conspires with Leonin to murder Marina and later tempts Cleon to be her partner in concealing the crime from Pericles. Dionyza is one of the several morality personifications as she stands for the old allegorical figure of 'Hypocrisy' when she hides hatred and malice behind the mask of gratitude.

It may be worth mentioning the way Pericles moralizes over his situation before solving Antiochus' riddle, resembles that of a hero in a morality play who usually makes a speech appropriate to the occasion when facing death. Pericles' speech gives a moral and didactic implication to the play as Pericles thanks Antiochus for teaching him through this deadly riddle a valuable piece of morality:

"I thank thee, who hath
taught
My frail morality to know itself,...
For death remembered should be Like a mirror,
Who tells us life's but breath, to trust it error."

Pericles act1, sc.1, p.999.

As the play proceeds our attention is drawn by the shift in the play's centre of gravity from Pericles as a prince and a public figure to Pericles as a kind of every man, a husband and a father. Pericles, in the scene when his wife Thaisa dies the moment Marina is born, is subjected to a new moral trail. In this scene "The circumstances of Marina's birth are extraordinary, yet her birth is distinguished from that of all men only in the degree of its difficulty and is described more as a paradigm of human childbirth than as a special case. The storm is generalized, the child's birth shown as an entry into storm-tossed morality".(3)

Marina's birth deepens the main image of the world as a lasting tempest separating both Marina and Pericles. However, the sea in Shakespeare's late romances which separates lovers and families, is not what it seems to be a mere "chaiotic activity of fortune but is really the action of providence when out of the apparent chaos comes harmony".(4)

This fact is referred to by Pericles when he, after far wanderings over many years was finally rewarded by being reunited with his family.

It may be worth noting, Marina endured grief and sorrow when misfortune or rather the providence not only deprived her of her parents but made the queen of Tharsus conspire to murder her.

However, when Marina's life was saved miraculously by the pirates, she was bound in servitude. The pirates who kidnapped her, sold her to those who worked in the prostitution trade. So Marina faced a new trial in the form of a threat to her honour and chastity but she with her faith in the providence stood against corruption.

In this respect Pericles has some resemblance to miracle plays and the medieval religious drama. The emphasis on saint-like trials, sorrows and sea-voyages are part of moral trials. Most important is the emphasis on the recognition and the resurrection scenes which are essential parts of the miracle plays.

The miracle plays present an exemplary, if not explicitly allegorical action which is in its very nature analogous to the experience of every good Christian as well as that of Christ himself.

Northrop Frye finds that "the primitive mythical dimension and the technical interest in the last plays reflect those aspects of the mystery, morality and miracle plays which are Shakespeare's primary dramatic models, and which also happen to be Christian".(5)

It is possible to view these romances as "religious allegories" (6) to see that they deal with subjects related to human experience such as guilt and contrition, the problem of evil, death and rebirth and the mystery of things that can be called religious. In Pericles Gower connects our experience of the play with the experience the play reveals. That is to say, Pericles' family is finally restored to him and he is redeemed from his purgatorial suffering. Similarly, the tale itself is conceived as a restorative to its audience. In this sense, time in Shakespeare's late romances is not what it seems to be the destroyer but the redeemer of human nature.

The reader is constantly reminded by Gower and several other characters of Pericles' lack of patience or the ability to endure without complaining or getting angry at the gods. Gower through out the play instructs the audience to have patience and to bear with Pericles just as he must learn to bear with misfortine and entertain his hard fate without repining or passionately declaiming providence.

The following lines reveal Pericles' indignation and impatient outcry on the gods upon the loss of Thaisa:

"O you gods!
Why do you make us love your goodly gifts,
And snatch them straight away?"

Pericles, act3, sc.1, p.1010.

In another scene Pericles got angry at the gods for having caused a violent tempest which wrecked his vessel and threw him ashore. In the following lines Pericles addresses angrily the gods instead of showing resignation to the providential will. He blames the gods for all his misfortunes without realizing that suffering inflicted upon him is part of a series of trials:

"Let it suffice the greatness of your powers
To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes;
And having thrown him from your watery grave,
Here to have death in peace ia all he'll crave"

Pericles, act2, sc.1, p.1004.

Pericles' previously mentioned outcry is answered in the recognition scene when the goddess Diana appears to him in a vision directing him to her temple where his wife Thaisa is to be found in the company of other maiden priestesses.

This brings out the discussion on the theophanies in Pericles and Cymbeline which point to the divine forces and the providential will that have shaped the life of man in those plays for better and worse.

The theophany in Pericles signifies that Pericles has been finally rewarded by the gods and the divine grace for his penitence. In the theophany the goddess Diana asks him to make sacrifices upon her altar bidding him retell his story to everyone to show how he mourns his crosses and eventually repents over his violent range at the gods. In the recognition scenes Pericles, having found Thaisa and Marina, promises Diana to offer her night-oblations.

It is interesting to note the forgiveness of sins and the reformation of the penitent are usually enforced by theophanies or oracular dreams that are immediately followed by family reunion and reconciliation.

The extremity of Pericles' suffering and the painful ordeal of selfmortification are recompensed in his later sublimity to a glorified and exalted status of the blessed. "He has been 'sacred' to the gods in both senses of that primal word, both 'cursed' and 'blessed', as every man is in the Christian scheme of things".(7)

The recognition scene begins with our apprehension of a purgatorial figure in a state of deep mourning and penitence. Pericles, believing his daughter is dead, takes an oath whereby he appears dressed in a sackcloth, fourteen years unshaven, fasting and isolating himself from the social community. Shakespeare could have seen in Pericles a paradigm of the mortal life of man which becomes evident in its pattern of pianful adventures.

Shakespeare by showing the accidental aspects, yet, stressing the providential aspect of the story remains true to its pattern of adventures and moral trials.

This brings out the discussion on the natural and social orders which are seen in the romances as not essentially good or helpful. The reader is made acquainted with the humiliation, loss and brutality that Pericles and Marina encounter at every turn in their wanderings. The visions of these late romances are tested against what amounts to a universal law of frustration.

This fact appears clearly in Cymbeline when the god Jupiter who appears in a theophany to Posthumus, discloses his design very late in the final scenes, that our final impression may well give greater weight to incidents which constantly oppress and frustrate man's hopes and aspirations.

In the following lines Jupiter discloses the reasons behind subjecting Posthumus to hard trials and intense suffering:

"Be not with mortal accidents oppressed,
No care of yours it is; you know 'tis ours
Whom best I love I criss; to make my gift,
The more delayed, delighted. Be content."

Cymbeline, act5, sc.4. p. 962

The protagonists of these romances usually earn their final prosperity through the severity of their trials. Pericles, reunited with Marina, hears the music of the spheres and falls asleep to the sound where he sees a vision that directs him to his wife's destination.

In Pericles Marina appears as human embodiment of Diana's divine grace and chastity when she redeemed the inmates of the brothel, similarly, she redeemed her father from his suffering. The redemptive love of father and child is at the center of the Christian mystery and is clearly paralleled in this play. The opening scene has suggested the fall, the closing ones the redemption. Pericles in the following lines expresses his joy at his reunion with Marina who restored life to the spiritually dead father:

"O, come hither, thou that begett'st him that did thee beget".

Pericles, act5, sc.1 p. 1023

In another scene Pericles explicitly connects Cerimon's restorative art to miracles. Thus calling the reader's attention to the dramatic antecedents of this play for what is called miracle plays or simply miracles when saints act as agents showing the gods' immense power. The protagonists of these romances expect the worst, yet, the ending of the romances comes to them nothing less than a miracle referring at once to the providence that has shaped their end. In the following lines Perciles inquires about the person responsible for miraculously restoring life to the supposed dead Thaisa:

"Who to thank,
Besides the gods, for this great miracle"

Pericles, act5, sc.2, p. 1024

Cerimon who acts as a medical and wpiritual healer applies his restorative art to the entranced corps of Thaisa. He delivers a long monologue on the moral status of such art declaring that man could attain the immortal status of the gods through his skill in the art of physics.

His monologue has numerous precedents in the medieval drama as he emphasizes his rejection of wealth and worldly glory. Cerimon, having miraculously resurrected Thaisa by his art, stands on the same level with the 'Christ of the miracle play. For the scene also has its medieval precedents; it is analogous to the raising of the Queen of Marcyll, apparently dead after childbirth, and of Lazarus in the Digby Mary Magdalene.'[8] Cerimon's powers of restoration recall the purpose of the tale itself as Gower had stated it in the prologue. His charity aligned him with Pericles, whose gift of corn to Tharsus had restored life to the people of Tharsus. In the following lines one of the bystandards marvels at Cerimon's act:

"The heavens,
Through you, increase our wonder, and set up
Your fame forever".

Pericles, act3, sc.2, p. 1012

Everything we learn about Cerimon establishes his moral bearings within the design of the play. One of the gentlemen marvels at Cerimon's restorative power and charity:

"Your honour has through Ephesus poured forth
you charity, and hundreds call themselves your creatures,
who by you have been restored."

Pericles, act3, sc.2, p. 1012

The miracle play is "a medieval dramatization of Biblical story or of a saint's life. The morality play, a later development which remained popular into the sixteenth century was an allegorical dramatization of the conflict between good and evil."[9]

R.G. Hunter made the following distinction between the mystery play and the miracle play "The mystery is a play concerned with the story of creation, fall, redemption and last judgment of man and based on incidents selected from Old and New Testament. The miracles, on the other hand, non allegorical drama based on non-scriptural narrative but didactically religious in purpose".[10]

Both miracle and morality plays show us men in the process of gaining salvation just like the protagonists of Shakespeare's late romances. These protagonists are in danger of eternal damnation for their sins, yet it is their contrition that saves them.

Suffering is an essential part in the life of Pericles and Posthumus when they are deprived of all hope and are rendered absolute for death and this is essential for their redemption.

The guilty conscience of these protagonists intensifies their suffering. For instance, Posthumus in Cymbeline regrets passing unfair judgment on Imogen when he having mistakenly believed she betrayed him, ordered Pisanio to murder her.

The three forms of morality, mystery and miracle plays are significant in shaping Shakespeare's dramatic traditional. Pericles' audition to the music of the spheres followed by a theophany corresponds, with a difference, to the conventional ending of the miracle play. In the miracle play "The saint or the enlightened is translated to heaven to the accompaniment of angelic choirs."(11)

Shakespeare's romances deviate from the miracle plays in ending not with the protagonist's death, but with the family reunion. For instance, although Pericles hears the music of the spheres, he doesn't die a martyr's death or become St. Pericles, but is revived by Marina's redemptive love and sacred physic. Both Thaisa and Pericles are saved from death in a romantic rather than in an explicitly Christian sense.

So Shakespeare tries to make the reader comprehend the idea that Pericles has an analogy rather than an identity with the Christian story or history. Pericles in the following lines compares Marina to a god-like figure as he praises her ability to revive him spiritually:

"Thou'st been godlike perfect, thou'rt the heir of Kingdoms,
And another life to Pericles thy father."

Pericles, act5, sc.2, p. 1023

Similarly, Cerimon, who acts as an agent showing the gods' power, is compared by Pericles to a god when he succeeds to revive Thaisa through his physics:

"The gods can have no mortal officer
More like a god than you."

Pericles, act3, sc.2, p. 1025

Thaisa in the following lines comments on Cerimon's regenerative power in restoring life to her:

"This man,
Through whom
The gods have shown their power."
Pericles, act4, sc.2, p. 1025

Pagan deities like Diana in Pericles or Jupiter in Cymbeline are in charge of the action, yet, it is important to understand these are conventional deities of classical romance rather than substitutes for God. "By employing Pagan deities from conventional romance in Pericles, and by surrounding them with Christian-providential associations, Shakespeare has the best of both worlds: a timeless romantic action with unmistakably Christian relevence."(12)

Both Pericles and Thaisa withdraw into a willingly medieval asceticism. Thaisa confines herself in Diana's temple for fourteen years, similarly, Pericles spends fourteen years in a state of penitence and selfmortification as he experiences a kind of spiritual rebirth. Shakespeare when writing Pericles knows he is writing to an audience already familiar with the allegorical-religious kind of drama. Shakespeare through the moral speeches of Gower seems to be telling the audience not to respond as they would to a realistic play but to respond appropriately to a parabolic drama. The final speech of Gower is an appropriate piece of morality to the audience:

"In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard
Of monstrous lust the due and just reward:
In Pericles, his queen and daughter, seen,
Although assailed with fortune fierce and keen,
Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast."
Pericles, act5, sc.2, p. 1025

Pericle's decision not to take an act of vengeance on Cleon and his wife or on the pirates who kidnapped Marina and took her to the corrupted world of the brothel, reveal a feature common to Shakespeare's last plays. The protagonist doesn't think of taking revenge rather this task is left to the gods that act as fair judges. For instance Antiochus and his daughter were punished by the gods as sinners for their involvement in an incestuous relation:

"A fire from heaven came, and shrivelled up their bodies."
Pericles, act2, sc.4, p. 1008

Similarly, Cleon and his wife were punished by the gods for their involvement in a conspiracy against Marina when the people burned the king and the queen inside the palace:

"..., to rage the city turn,
That him and his they in his palace burn;
The gods for murder seemed so content
To punish them, ..."

Pericles, act5, sc.2, p. 1025

In Cymbeline, Posthumus spares lachimo's life and forgives him for all his deception. However, the gods punished lachimo as a sinner when he later soliloquize over his guilt and feels as if the air of Imogen's country revengingly weakens his health. Pericles enhances the moral vision of the play after the fashion of the earlier religious drama when it sets up moral patterns of contrasts and similarities. For instance, the earlier scene with the fishermen had presented regenerated men whose Biblical simplicity and wisdom raised them above social evils and human infirmities they discussed in parables. By contrast, the brothel scene presents human nature at its most degenerated level. Pericles' public charity at Tharsus is contrasted with the conspiracy attempted by the queen of Tharsus against Marina. Moreover, Antiochus' incestuous daughter is a moral antitype to the virtuous Thaisa. Marina is contrasted with the debased human nature of the inmates of the brothel. Thaliard who turns assassin anxious to kill Pericles, is contrasted with Helicanus whom Pericles tests and finds faithful and true. Antiochus is contrasted in his role as a tyrant with Pericles who is a virtuous and responsible ruler.

The characters in Pericles have the habit of stepping outside their roles commenting on their own and one another's conduct from the moral perspective of the play. For instance, Lysimachus identifies Marina with virtue:

"Thou art a piece of virtue."

Pericles, act4, sc.5, p. 1019

Virtue embodied in Marina prevails to reform and convert religiously the inmates of the brothel and its bawds. In Pericles human nature becomes redeemable since grace personified in Marina abounds even to the worst of the sinners.

The pre-Shakespearean drama is full of maidns like Marina who represents a popular tradition of incorruptibly virtuous heroines that win the admiration of the contemporary reader who retains much of the medieval delight in didacticism.

Marina is often connected with allegorical figures that have their precedence in the earlier drama when Truth and Justice appear on stage bringing forth reunion and reconciliation. In the following lines, Pericles compares Marina to Justice and Truth as allegorical Figures:

"For thou look'st
Modest as Justice, and thou seem'st a palace
For the crown'd Truth to dwell in. "
Pericles, act5, sc.1, p. 1022

Pericles in another speech compares Marina to the allegorical Figure Patience:

"Thou dost look
Like Patience gazing on Kings' graves, and smiling."
Pericles, act5, sc.1, p. 1022

In Cymbeline just as in Pericles there is a pattern of contrasts and parallels which enhances the moral aspect of the play. For instance the contrast between imogen and her stepmother who is an archetype of the wicked queen. Both the queen in Cymbeline and Dionyza in Pericles carry on an established pattern of plotting females and malevolent stepmothers to whom the innocent heroines like Marina or Imogen fall victims. The other contrast is between Posthumus and Cloten, which is a contrast between civility and barbarism as Cloten plans to ravish Imogen and humiliate her for rejecting him in favour of Posthumus.

The other contrast is between honest Posthumus and the deceitful Iachimo who has done injury to imogen's reputation for the sake of winning a wager. He evokes Posthumus' jealousy by convincing him that his wife Imogen is unfaithful to him.

Iachimo further enhances his false accusation by supplying Posthumus with a tangible evidence taken by way of deception and intrigue to convince him that Imogen has easily betrayed him. Moreover, Iachimo lies to Imogen telling her false report about Posthumus. He even urges Imogen to surrender to him but she rejects his temptation. Posthumus, having finally discovered the truth forgives Iachimo for all his villainy.

The morality related world in Pericles and Cymbeline becomes most evident in the division of characters into the good and the wicked after the moral pattern of the earlier religious drama.

This brings out the discussion on the pattern of sin, contrition and forgiveness which is the basic pattern of the medieval morality and an essential pattern of Shakespeare's late romances. Medieval man knows himself to be a sinner and is in danger of damnation. The morality plays showed him that through contrition he could avoid damnation and win forgiveness. In this sense, contrition could be defined as "the voluntary sorrow for sin whereby man punishes in himself that which he grieves to have done. Contrition, whether as a part of the formal sacrament of penance, or non sacramentally as a virtue, is the cause of the forgiveness of sin. But its nature

as a cause must be carefully defined. God alone is the principale efficient cause of the forgiveness of sin."[13]

Usually salvation comes from God's mercy and love for human beings as mainfested in Christ's sacrifice. The forgiveness of sins is impossible without that mercy. With it, the forgiveness becomes dependent upon the will of the sinner. "To benefit by Christ's atonement, the sinner must experience contrition, 'the will to atone'. Contrition makes God's mercy available to men."[14] Shakespeare's late romances comply with the pattern of the medieval morality or rather with the pattern of sin, contrition and forgiveness. For instance, in Cymbeline Posthumus' jealousy and suspicions which are evoked by Iachimo, when in the wager plot he professes himself to be the winner of imogen's honour, led Posthumus to commit a sin he regrets later. Imogen struggles to obey Posthumus' murderous orders as she sees herself a destined victim. She submits to Posthumus' cruel judgement before taking her decision to venture into a masculine disguise to save herself.

Posthumus who regrets killing Imogen before giving her a chance to repent, struggles with a more complex problem of the gods' justice. In the foll owing lines Posthumus wished the gods had punished him for his own greater faults before he could kill Imogen for her lesser faults. He concedes that some privileged creatures die for lesser faults such as love while others are allowed to go on living, committing mistakes and sinking further in sin until they learn thrift from indulgence:

"Gods ! If you should have taken vengeance on my faults,
I never
Had lived to put on this: so had you sav'd
The noble Imogen to repent, and struck
Me, wretch more worth your vengeance. But a lack,
You snatch some hence for little faults, that's love,
To have them fall no more: you some permit
To second ills with ills, ..."

Cymbeline, act4, sc.1, p. 959

Posthumus recognizes a double obligation to person and to duty. He is strongly convinced that having killed Imogen, he will not fight against her country. It may be worth mentioning that part of Posthumus' contrition and penance has to do with his leaving the ranks of the Italian gentry disguising himself as a British peasant to fight with the British forces in preparation for what he expects to be a military defeat and death. Posthumus hopes his life can be dedicated as a triple atonement to country, family and wife.

Things ran contrary to his expectations when he achieved unexpected British victory in the battle against the Romans and was not killed. By then he was forced to acknowledge that his patriotism and self-sacrifice had failed

him. Eventually, Posthumus imposed a harsh judgement on himself when he played with his patriotism and exchanged his heroism for humiliation and defeat as still part of the penance. He does so when he takes back his Italian identity in an attempt to secure the destruction he seeks by some means for the sake of Imogen. The following soliloquy shows the penitent Posthumus when he is captured as a prisoner of war by the British forces. He welcomes this imprisonment as part of the contrition and penance. He also sees this bondage as a way to salvation and liberty. In the following lines Posthumus while he is imprisoned, entreats the gods to have mercy on him by way of death. He also entreats the gods to accept his repentance and to take his life for Imogen's life:

> "Most welcome, bondage!... ... you good gods,
> The pebnitent instrument to pick that bolt,
> Then free for ever! Is't enough I am sorry?
> Gods are more full of mercy. Must I repent? ...
> For Imogen's dear life take mine... ."
>
> Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 961

Forgiveness offered to the penitent by the gods appears most explicitly at the closing scenes of these late romances. This brings out the discussion on the theophanies and religious visions which occur at the final scenes in Pericles and Cymbeline. These theophanies surround the play with a supernatural atmosphere and the spirit of "nuptial festivity"[15] referring to the forces that have shaped the life of man in those plays for better and worse. These theophanies usually prepare the penitent for a forthcoming miracle which involves the rebirth or the apparent resurrection of a supposed dead wife or daughter. It becomes evident at the end that families are reunited after long separation, friends are reconciled and wounded souls are healed.

Both Posthumus and Pericles have oracular dreams preceded by a solemn sleep-inducing music which is meaningfully used. Posthumus while imprisoned sees a vision in which the apparitions of his dead parents and two brothers appear to him and encircle him as he lies sleeping. These apparitions were addressing Jupiter and were drawing upon mankind sorrows and suffering. They entreat Jupiter to end tormenting human beings:

> "No more, thou thunder-master, show
> Thy spite on mortal flies"
>
> Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 961

These apparitions praise Posthumus' fine qualities as they try to make Jupiter compassionate and forgiveable towards him. They draw upon the love

of Posthumus and Imogen and his unjust exile from the British court and from Imogen.

They even doubted Jupiter's justice as they questioned him for the reason behind inflicting suffering on Posthumus. They also asked Jupiter for the reason behind making Iachimo taint the heart and the noble mind of Posthumus with needless jealousy. In the following lines these apparitions entreat Jupiter to put an end to Posthumus' miseries otherwise, they would revolt against Jupiter:

"Thy crystal window ope; look out,
No longer exercise
Upon a valiant race they harsh
And potent injuries,
Peep through thy marble mansion; help;
Or we poor ghosts will cry
To the shining synod of the rest
Against thy deity."

Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 962

Usually sinners like Pericles or Posthumus or even Iachimo instruct the audience not by their deserved punishment but by their repentance and by gaining forgiveness just like the protagonists in the medieval miracle and morality plays. "It is essential to an understanding of these plays to grasp the fact that we are expected to identify with these figures and not to sit in judgement on them. The very horror of their sins should not alienate or shock us but should reassure us."(16) Medieval miracle and morality plays meant to express important truth about man's relationship to the universe and God. Each man's life would be judged according to the justice of God and each man's fate throughout eternity would be the result of that judgement.

Moreover human beings are sinners by nature and can expect punishment by spending eternity in hell, unless God mitigates his judgement with mercy.

Divine forgiveness and grace developed in Pericles and Cymbeline to meet a didactic and spiritual need. Such grace provided a comforting reassurance to the penitent like, for instance, the forgiveness given by a superhuman power to the penitent Posthumus.

On the other hand, Jupiter in the oracular dream disclosed his design very late and only after Posthumus had been subjected to intense suffering and crises. The descent of Jupiter was doubly effective in the sense of stage-spectacle and dramatic purpose. Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning sitting upon an eagle and throws a thunderbolt. Immediately the ghosts fall on their knees showing their respect and submission to great Jupiter.

Jupiter reproaches the apparitions of Posthumus' dead parents for accusing him of being unjust and for threatening him of rebellion if he doesn't end Posthumus' miseries.

Jupiter then justifies his injuries to Posthumus as trials well endured by Posthumus, He then comforts the apparitions by promising them that Posthumus will be rewarded for his patience:

"Be content;
Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift:
His comforts thrive, his trials well are spent."
Cymbeline, act5, sc.5, p. 962

Jupiter also declares that he honours by his protection the love of Imogen and Posthumus who later get married in his temple and are blessed by Jupiter.

The reader sees in Jupiter's appearance an apparent poetic justice which assimilates to itself other manifestations of omnipotence. The essence of Jupiter's speech borrows terms of Christian revelation:

"Be not with mortal accidents oppressed;
No care of yours it is, you know 'tis ours.
Whom best I love I cross, to make my gift,
The more delayed, delighted."
Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 962

The reader may be entitled to see in the above mentioned lines a suggestion of the complete Christian fulfillment which some critics hold that Cymbeline approaches.

The play with its pattern of adventures and trials shows god's content to submit those who have succeeded in summoning him to the total arbitrament of that long succeeding final scene. In Cymbeline the god Jupiter contributes to the glamorous stage-business when he appears sitting on his eagle, then descends and leaves on Posthumus' bosom a label of cryptic prophecy. This label is interpreted by the soothsayer as a kind of prophecy denotes to Posthumus being reunited with his wife Imogen whom he mistakenly believes he has murdered.

The label which is a tangible evidence of an oracle and an answer to Posthumus' oracular dream, affirms Imogen's chastity and innocence. Moreover, it affirms that she will be restored to Posthumus and to her father. Imogen is referred to as:

"A piece of tender air, and when
From a stately cedar shall be lopped branches

Which, being dead many years, shall after
Revive, be jointed to the old stock, and
Freshly grow, then shall Posthumus
End his miseries.
Britain be fortunate, and flourish in peace and
plenty."

Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 968

The previously mentioned lines taken from the table laid on Posthumus' breast and referred to Cymbelines' two kidnapped sons whom he had lost twenty years ago and thought dead. The table also affirmed that Cymbeline's two sons would be restored to him. Moreover, Cymbeline is referred to as a 'stately cedar' and his two sons are referred to as 'lopped branches' who will be joined to the majestic cedar personates Cymbeline.

The label also prophesizes the redemptive power of love as the final peace being established between Rome and Britain. It may be worth mentioning that "the play's concluding peace-tableau presents dramatically the stillness of the world awaiting the appearance of the Christ-child, but it also pays tribute to James's the 1st strenuous peacemaking policy."(17)

It may be worth noting the character of Cymbeline, at the end of the play, has a direct reference to James 1st. "His chosen role as a peacemaker, the parallel between Cymbeline's submission to Rome and James's attempted negotiations with the papacy, supported further when Shakespeare provides Cymbeline unhistorically with a daughter and two sons, which James had." (18)

In the community of trust which the final scene creates, it becomes possible for Cymbeline to honour the past of Britain and pay the tribute to Rome although Britain is the victor. In doing so, Cymbeline teaches by the widest implication Posthumus to recognize the power he has over Iachimo is to forgive him for all his offenses. It may be worth noting Cymbeline's earlier disagreement with the Romans over the payment of tribute is caused by the queen and her son Cloten.

In Cymbeline the soothsayer's earlier vision is connected with the later vision of Posthumus. Both visions are prophesies denoting to the final peace between Britain and Rome. The contents of the soothsayer's vision were about a Roman sacred eagle migrating from South to West, then vanishing in the sunbeams.

According to the soothsayer's interpretation, the Roman Imperial eagle stands for Caesar. The soothsayer portends Caesar will be reconciled with Cymbeline. R. Moffet brings out the Christian element of the prophesying, establishing "a Christian scriptural and sacred poetical tradition for the final augury, whereby that eagle's flight into the sun, while retaining its emblematic significance of virtue migrating from Rome to Britain, has also a

traditional meaning that has to do with the general rejuvenation and renewal of life and vision applicable to all the surviving persons of the play." (19)

It is essential to remember that Pericles and Cymbeline are enriched with morality standards and the existence of the miracle element. Moreover, they are celebrations not of passing strict judgement on the sinners but of the prevailence of grace and forgiveness. If we apply to Pericles or Posthumus the standards of morality based on the fitting of punishment to crime where they are liable to spend eternity in hell, the miracle element together with the divine grace becomes incomprehensible.

Shakespear wanted the audience to grasp the idea that tragic passions need not always have tragic results and that sinners are given a chance to repent and redeem themselves.

Most important is those sinned against like Marina or Imogen are spared so that they can forgive the sinners. Pericles and Cymbeline are meant to provide examples against the despair of a sinning humanity convinced by its inability to attain salvation. Shakespeare in these romances not only dramatizes an action in which a central figure sins, repents and is forgiven but within these plays are forces demand justice and forces plead for mercy.

There are two kinds of forgiveness in Shakespeare's late romances. The first one has to do with the divine mercy upon the sinner, whereas the other forgiveness is given freely by the offended party. This kind of noble forgiveness is like God's forgiveness and it is merited as it is in the miracle and morality plays, by contrition. This should not be surprising since a basic principle of the Christian doctrines concerns the relationship of men to one another, a principle insists that:

"In forgiving those who trespass against us, we should emulate the charity of God." (20)

In the following lines Posthumus acknowledges the power he has over Iachimo is to forgive him for all his villainy in a spirit of something more than mere justice:

"Kneel not to me;
The power that I have on you is to spare you;
The malic towards you to forgive you : live
And deal with others better."

Cymbeline, act5, sc.4, p. 968

Iachimo's confession of his vile intrigue makes the reader see that Shakespeare stresses through the attitude of Posthumus and Imogen qualities of the ideal and true Christian like being merciful and forgiving. Similarly, the penitent Posthumus confesses to Cymbeline his sin of instructing Pisanio to murder Imogen. Eventually, Cymbrline having recognized Imogen is alive, forgives Posthumus. Also Cymbeline forgives Guiderius for killing the

disreputable Cloten. Most important of all, Cymbeline forgives Bellarius for kidnapping his two sons, when Cymbeline knows that Bellarius has done so to revenge for the unjust banishment he has inflicted on him.

Cymbeline overjoyed for having recovered his daughter Imogen, pardons publicly all those who offended him including Iachimo who has earlier injured the reputation of Imogen. Cymbeline even pardons and releases the Roman captives. In doing so, Cymbeline is teaching others to love and forgive.

The closing scenes of Cymbeline are celebrations of the prevailence of grace, reconciliation and peace between Rome and Britain. The soothsayer with full realization assures everyone that the final peace is achieved with the assistance of the gods:

"The fingers of the powers above do tune
The harmony of this peace."

Cymbeline, act5, sc.5, p. 968

Cymbeline having acknowledged gods' grace and blessings, decides immediately to go to the altar in the temple of great Jupiter to offer a sacrifice to the gods.

Reward and forgiveness which the gods are finally ready to grant the protagonists enhance the holy sphere of these plays in a way that complies with the Christian doctrines.

Conclusion

The pattern of sin, contrition and forgiveness in addition to the moral vision emphasized in Pericles and Cymbeline are shared by a basic medieval dramatic element that is the miracle and the miracle-working figure. Shakespeare through the presentation of gods and goddesses doesn't comply with the strict neoclassical demand for poetic justice. This becomes evident through Diana's grace to Pericles or Jupiter's grace to Posthumus. Undoubtedly, divine grace and forgiveness offered to the penitent are at the heart of Christianity just as in the miracle and morality plays of the medieval religious drama although Pericles and Cymbeline deviate from the medieval drama in not ending with the protagonist's death. However, Shakespeare tries to make the reader comprehened the idea that his plays have an analogy rather then an identity with the Christian history. In Perciles and Cymbeline the gods are presented as a supernatural controlling force bringing forth reunion and reconciliation. Moreover, these plays enhance the idea of the purgation of the penitent. The theophanies and the intercession of the gods not only direct the tragic course of the play to a happy end but ensures the protagonist's salvation.

The use of the miracle element has a didactic religious purpose since it becomes a kind of mechanism for showing god's grace upon the penitent. Meracles in Shakespeare's late romances involve the resurrection of characters who are supposed to be dead or lost and they also involve family reunion. For instance, the resurrection of Cymbeline's two lost sons and his supposed dead daughter or the reunion of Imogen with her brothers and her husband. The same can be said about Pericles when he is finally reunited with his supposed dead wife and daughter.

The redemptive power of love dominates the closing scenes of Shakespeare's late romances, moreover, the moral pattern of these plays is designed to show the audience that any sins including their own will be forgiven if they repent.

Shakespeare, in constructing Cymbeline and Pericles round the theme of forgiveness, worked in an analogous manner to the medieval author of dramatic miracles when everything had been adopted for the purpose of religious didacticism.

The protagonists in Pericles and Cymbeline gained forgiveness and divine grace after going through the long process of expiation and self-mortification. In other words, these plays show us men in the process of gaining salvation. Eventually, their contrition saves them from eternal.

Endnotes

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7- Felperin, The Romances, p. 167.
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10- R. G. Hunter, Forgiveness of Sins in the Medieval Drama (London: Gollancz, 1970), p. 21.
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12- Ibid., p. 169.
13- Hunter, Forgiveness of Sins in the Medieval Drama, p. 20.

14- Ibid., p. 20.
15- Felperin, Toward Shakespearean Romance, p. 66.
16- Hunter, Forgiveness of Sins in the Medieval Drama, p. 37.
17- Bernard Harris, 'What's Past is Prologue' : 'Cymbeline' and 'Henry VIII', Later Shakespeare, edited by John Russel Brown and Bernard Harris (Great Britain, Unwin Brothers Ltd, 1974), p. 209.
18- Ibid., p. 209.
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