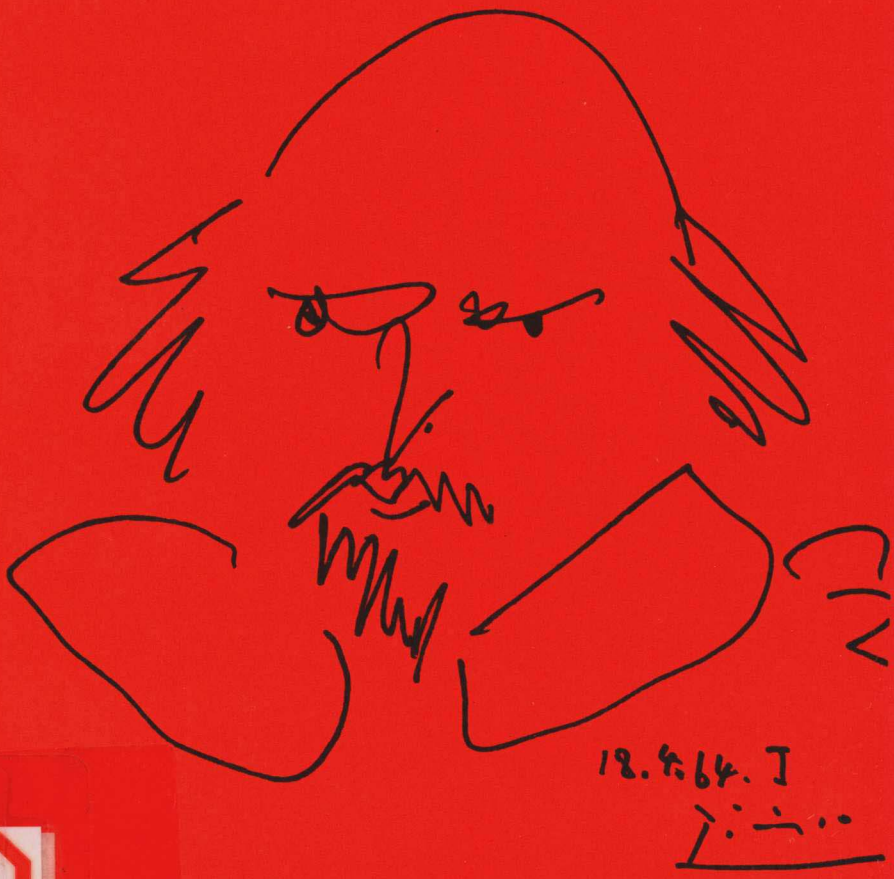
THE NEW SHAKESPEARE

Cymbeline



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CYMBELINE

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PREFATORY NOTE

With some Observations on the Vision in the last Act

By undertaking full responsibility for the ensuing volume Mr J. C. Maxwell once again places me very much in his debt. And subscribers will be glad to learn that he is already busily engaged upon *Henry VIII*; that *King Lear* for which Professor Duthie and I are jointly responsible and *Coriolanus* which I am tackling single-handed are both now in the press; and that when these three are published, some time in 1960, it is hoped, or earlier, they will complete the tale of thirty-seven plays belonging to the accepted canon. After that will follow the *Poems* and the *Sonnets*, which Mr Maxwell and I plan to share between us, while Mr Peter Ure has kindly consented to edit for me the uncanonical *Two Noble Kinsmen* which many consider to be by Shakespeare and Fletcher working in collaboration, and which thus has probably as much right as *Pericles* to be included in the Works. It begins to look therefore as if this edition, hopefully launched as a ten-year project in 1921, under the sporting title of *The New Shakespeare*, may reach its conclusion some forty years later.

Unlike most previous editors, Mr Maxwell can find, he tells us, no grounds for believing that Shakespeare was not the sole author of *Cymbeline*. He is even ready to accept as genuine the Vision at 5. 4. 30ff. which critics as eminent and as diverse as Pope and Johnson, Edmund Chambers and Granville-Barker dismiss as 'a spectacular theatrical interpolation'. I quote Chambers's

words, and must confess that I find myself subscribing to them.

It cannot be denied that the Vision had become an integral part of the play before the text left Shakespeare's hands, and must therefore be held to carry his imprimatur, since the references to it in the following scene (5. 5. 426 ff.) are indisputably his. The case too for its authenticity seems to have been much strengthened of late through the discovery by Mr Wilson Knight and others of parallels between it and other plays written by Shakespeare at the same period. Yet such parallels, I suggest, might have occurred in works by another dramatist familiar with the plays in question, and though I am not proposing Marston as a candidate, the well-known echoes of Shakespeare in *The Malcontent* illustrate the sort of thing I have in mind. The most striking of the parallels in the Vision is for example that in the opening lines:

> No more, thou thunder-master, show
> Thy spite to mortal flies,

which is an obvious reflexion of Gloucester's cry in *King Lear*:

> As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.

But though Shakespeare often repeats himself, does he ever do so after this crude fashion elsewhere? To my mind the passage is not repetition but imitation, and a bad one at that.

Further, when the circumstances in which he and the company stood at the time *Cymbeline* was first produced are considered, it is not difficult to see how he might have agreed to a spectacular interpolation by another writer. By 1609–10 he was probably often at Stratford, and the text of *Cymbeline* like that of other late plays contains

some of those long and detailed stage-directions which suggest that he could not feel certain of being present to supervise rehearsal.[1] It was a time of change for the company too; this being the year when they began playing at the Blackfriars Theatre as well as at the Globe. Now the Blackfriars, an indoor candle-lighted playhouse, was much more suitable for the creation of theatrical illusion than an open-air one and served a more sophisticated and more fashionable audience. And though it would be going too far to claim these conditions as responsible for the episodic structure and fairyland atmosphere of Shakespeare's last plays, those plays assuredly ministered to the taste of a public nourished on the court masques which, especially after the advent of Inigo Jones in 1607, became the rage of Jacobean London.[2] The Vision in *Cymbeline* was clearly designed in response to this taste, and it is even possible that Inigo Jones was called in to produce it, inasmuch as a Jupiter riding astride an eagle and grasping thunderbolts in one hand is the subject of one of his designs, now at Chatsworth, for the masque of *Tempe Restored* which he produced in 1632.[3] In any case in 1610 such a flight was a new and thrilling development of the theatrical machines and was probably the play's chief attraction for most of the audience.[4]

Let us then imagine Shakespeare at Stratford with his hands full of local and domestic affairs, suddenly receiving word from London that his company wished

[1] See W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955), pp. 398, 404, 412.

[2] See G. E. Bentley, *Shakespeare Survey*, 1 (1948), 38–50.

[3] The design is reproduced as Fig. 45 in Allardyce Nicoll's *Stuart Masques* (1937).

[4] See J. C. Adams, *The Globe Playhouse* (1942), pp. 336–41.

to introduce a Vision into the play he was already engaged upon for Blackfriars. The Vision, they told him, would exhibit a new triumph of stage-flying, and knowing he could not come to London to see what was involved they had asked *X* to draft the script. Being the easy-going dramatist he was, would he not have replied that if they sent him a copy he would do his best to fit it in? This is of course mere guesswork and the explanation may have been quite different. But the explanation I find quite incredible is that, being the poet he was, whatever else he wrote or did not write in this play, he could possibly have written what Granville-Barker calls 'the jingling twaddle of the apparitions'.

J.D.W.

INTRODUCTION

I. *Date and Authenticity*

The first recorded mention of *Cymbeline* is by Simon Forman.[1] The performance he describes is not likely to have been the first, but we cannot be sure how much earlier the play is. The commonly accepted dates for Shakespeare's 'romances' are still those proposed by Chambers: *Cymbeline*, 1609–10; *The Winter's Tale*, 1610–11; *The Tempest*, 1611–12;[2] but *The Tempest* is the only one that is at all securely dated, in 1611. Even the relative dating of the other two is uncertain, though it is reasonable to associate the greater artistic assurance of *The Winter's Tale* with a later date, which is also supported by the fact that Shakespeare undoubtedly knew the Boccaccio source of *Cymbeline* when he wrote *The Winter's Tale*.[3] I think Chambers's date for *The Winter's Tale* may well be a year too late. There is a fairly close verbal parallel between *The Winter's Tale*, 4. 4. 129–32 and *Philaster*, 4. 4. 2–6,[4] which seems to me most easily explained as an echo of the former by the latter; and *Philaster* is not later than 8 October 1610.[5] (Parallels which Nosworthy[6] cites between *Philaster*

[1] See Stage-history, p. xliii.

[2] E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare* (1930), I, 271; the dating is in terms of theatrical seasons.

[3] See *The Winter's Tale*, Herford cited in note on 4. 4. 778–85 in this edition.

[4] Noted by E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (1938), p. 9. The Shakespeare passage is reminiscent also of *Pericles*, 5. 3. 44–5, as Malone noted.

[5] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), III, 223.

[6] Arden edition of *Cymbeline* (1955), p. xxxix; cf. below, 5. 2. 2–6 n.

and *Cymbeline* are less persuasive, though the mention in *Philaster*, 4. 5. 115 of 'Augustus Caesar', who has nothing to do with the subject, may, as he suggests, be due to a recollection of *Cymbeline*.) If *The Winter's Tale* is 1609–10,[1] then perhaps *Cymbeline* is 1608–9.[2] This is the season to which Chambers attributes *Pericles*, but an earlier date seems more probable.[3] It may well be that, as Nosworthy suggests, the composition of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* 'was more or less simultaneous or, at any rate, that both had been written, revised and prepared for the stage before either was actually performed, with consequent cross-fertilisation';[4] if the first performance of *Cymbeline* was a public one, it cannot have been earlier than December 1609, when the theatres reopened for the first time since August 1608.

The exclusively Shakespearian authorship of *Cymbeline* has not been as radically challenged as has that of *Pericles* or of *Henry VIII*, but the play lies under more suspicion than either *The Winter's Tale* or *The Tempest*. The Variorum edition, left in an unsatisfactory state by H. H. Furness at his death and published in 1913, contains a number of arbitrary assertions in Introduction and Notes which, taken together, would deny a good deal of the play to Shakespeare; and H. Granville-Barker in 1930 was still sufficiently under the influence of this sort of criticism to hold that 'a fair

[1] Thorndike's claim (see *The Winter's Tale* in this edition, pp. x–xi) that the dance in *The Winter's Tale*, 4. 4, is a borrowing from Jonson's masque *Oberon* (1 January 1611), does not strike me as plausible.

[2] There were private performances in London during this season, though the plague prevented public ones (Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, 351).

[3] See *Pericles* in this edition, pp. 88–9.

[4] Arden *Cymbeline*, p. xvi.

amount of the play—both of its design and execution—is pretty certainly not Shakespeare's'.[1] Granville-Barker's own positive contribution to the criticism of the play goes a long way towards undermining the foundations of this view, and the play's substantial integrity is generally accepted today. But there is one part that has more often than not been denied to Shakespeare from Pope onwards: the Vision of 5. 4, which even such a conservative critic as Sir Edmund Chambers rejects as 'a spectacular theatrical interpolation'.[2] Certainly the central part of this is a passage which few would be sorry to attribute to another hand, but I cannot feel that the evidence for denying it to Shakespeare is at all strong.[3]

The first question to be asked is: if there is an interpolation, how extensive is it? Pope rejected the whole of 5. 4 after line 29, and also 5. 5. 425–57. Chambers, against Dowden who 'would limit the extent of [the interpolation] to 30–92, leaving the dumb-show, with 97–126, and possibly 93–6 as genuine', held that 'the whole passage [that is, presumably, lines 30–150, with the introductory dumb-show] must stand or fall together. And with it must of course go the reference to the vision in 5. 5. 425–59 [=57]'.[4] It is certainly difficult to limit the interpolation as strictly as Dowden does, but it is equally difficult to regard 5. 4. 114–50 as wholly non-Shakespearian. And if there is some Shakespearian verse in the episode, the onus of proof is on those who claim to detect any alien material at all. On stylistic grounds Posthumus's speech on waking is surely unassailable, and with it must go the inscription on the tablet and, of course (as Chambers recognizes),

[1] *Prefaces to Shakespeare, Second Series* (1930), p. 243.
[2] *William Shakespeare* (1930), I, 486.
[3] For the opposite view, see Prefatory Note.
[4] *William Shakespeare* (1930), I, 486.

the explanation of it in the final scene, where, again, it would be hard to attribute to anyone but Shakespeare such lines as

> whose containing
> Is so from sense in hardness that I can
> Make no collection of it.

Even before Posthumus wakes, Sicilius's speech at ll. 114–19 has a Shakespearian ring. It seems clear, then, that there was a vision, and an enigmatic tablet, in Shakespeare's text of the play. The solution which some scholars, such as Fleay, have sought is to accept the stage-directions but reject the dialogue; and indeed it is only the fourteeners of ll. 30–92 that have caused real offence—ll. 93–113 pretty clearly stand or fall with them, but I do not think that they would in isolation have aroused any misgivings. The lines are certainly crude, but then this is on any showing a scene in which speech is subordinate to spectacle. The question as I see it resolves itself into this: is there any positive reason to suppose that Shakespeare would have presented this Vision entirely in dumb-show, or alternatively, that he would have assigned the task of writing about sixty[1] lines of verse in a deliberately old-fashioned style[2] for a special purpose to some playhouse hack, rather than undertake it himself?[3] I can see none, and accept the whole scene as Shakespeare's. I do so with no particular enthusiasm; but I think the more thoroughgoing defence by G. Wilson Knight[4] deserves attention. His elaborate discussion would probably not convince a

[1] According to the traditional lineation; in reality, thirty fourteeners with three short lines.

[2] Cf. Hardin Craig, *Shakespeare Survey*, 1 (1948), 55.

[3] Nosworthy, p. xxxvi of his edition, is probably right in tracing this passage to the introductory theophany in *Love and Fortune*.

[4] *The Crown of Life* (1947), pp. 168–202.

hardened sceptic that the Vision is authentic, but it shows that the author, whoever he was, knew the rest of the play well. And against Chambers's rejection of the whole episode, I regard as weighty Wilson Knight's contention that, without it '*Cymbeline* is left, alone in this group, without any striking transcendental moment',[1] though I think the phrase inflates the significance of what the scene in fact offers.

II. *Sources*

The chronicle material which is used in *Cymbeline* consists of scattered fragments in and about the reign of 'Kymbeline or Cimbeline the sonne of Theomantius', whom Holinshed dates 33 B.C. to A.D. 2. (The historical Cunobellinus, whose dates are somewhat later, need not detain us.)[2] These are collected in W. G. Boswell-Stone's *Shakespere's Holinshed* (1896), and present no features of special interest. All that Shakespeare takes for his main plot is the account of the temporary refusal of tribute (either by Cymbeline or by his son).[3] The battle, completely fictitious in this historical context, represents Shakespeare's closest borrowing from Holinshed in the play, but it is from the *History of Scotland*, the account of the battle of Luncarty (near Perth) in A.D. 976, where 'an husbandman. . . named Haie' and his two sons play the parts of Belarius and the princes. In the Appendix A (*d*) which

[1] *Ibid.* p. 191. A convenient conspectus of earlier views is given in Appendix D of A. J. Wyatt's Warwick edition [1897].

[2] There is a recent sketch by C. M. Matthews, 'The True Cymbeline' (*History Today*, VII (1957), 755–9).

[3] The son, Guiderius, in Holinshed (Boswell-Stone, p. 10). Shakespeare, as Dowden notes (p. xix of his edition), agrees with Spenser, *Faerie Qveene*, II. x. 50.

he has contributed to J. M. Nosworthy's Arden edition (1955), H. F. Brooks cites parallels which establish a reasonable probability that Shakespeare also consulted Blenerhasset's 'Complaint of Guidericus' in the *Second Part of the Mirrour for Magistrates* (1578), and some of the 'tragedies' in Higgins's *Mirrour for Magistrates* (1587; some already in earlier editions). What is of more interest than the details of Shakespeare's selection of historical material is its combination with the other elements in the play, and this will be discussed in a later section.

The non-chronicle material raises more complicated problems. The main source for the Italianate element in the story, in particular the wager plot, is, as has always been recognized, Boccaccio's *novella*, 'Bernabò da Genova e la moglie Zinevra' (*Decamerone*, II. 9). The central theme of this is familiar to students of folk-lore, but it is doubtful if any earlier versions are relevant to Shakespeare. One closely similar version of the story has certainly had some influence on *Cymbeline*: the late fifteenth-century German *Historie von vier Kaufmännern*, translated into English, through a Dutch intermediary, as *Frederick of Jennen*,[1] first published at Antwerp in 1518, and reprinted *c.* 1520 and *c.* 1560.[2]

Boccaccio's story opens with the laying of the wager, after Ambruogiuolo of Piacenza, at a gathering of Italian merchants in Paris, has challenged the claims made by Bernabò of Genoa on behalf of his wife's chastity. Ambruogiuolo goes to Genoa, and, having

[1] This is the name assumed by the heroine in masculine disguise.

[2] *Shakespeare Quarterly*, IX (1958), 262, records an article by Margaret Schlauch, *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, IV (1957), 95–120, which argues that the translator may be Lawrence Andrewe (on whom see *Dictionary of National Biography*).

heard of the reputation borne by Bernabò's wife Zinevra, decides that his enterprise is hopeless. However, by bribing a woman who frequents Zinevra's house, he obtains access to her bedchamber concealed in a chest, notes the details of the room and a distinguishing mark on Zinevra's body, and steals a purse and other articles. When he returns to Paris, he finally convinces Bernabò, whom the other tokens have left sceptical, by telling him that Zinevra has a mole under her left breast, surrounded by about six golden hairs. Bernabò, on his return, stops twenty miles from Genoa and sends a servant with a letter summoning Zinevra to come to him. At the same time he instructs the servant to take her to a suitable place and kill her. When the moment comes, she pleads successfully for her life, and persuades the servant to return with some of her clothes as evidence that he has killed her. From this point, the story has no close resemblance to that of *Cymbeline*. Zinevra assumes masculine disguise and, after various adventures, finds herself in the service of the sultan at Alexandria; and after meeting Ambruogiuolo at Acre, in possession of some of the tokens stolen from her, she finally extracts a confession from him at Alexandria, in the presence of Bernabò, who has been summoned thither. Ambruogiuolo is anointed with honey and tied to a stake, where he is stripped to the bones by flies, wasps and gadflies, while Zinevra returns to live happily with Bernabò at Genoa.

It is evident that Boccaccio, whether in the original or in the French translation of Antoine le Maçon (1545, often reprinted),[1] is Shakespeare's main source. Most of his modifications are intelligible in the light of other elements in the plot, or from their dramatic effective-

[1] H. G. Wright, *Modern Language Review*, L (1955), 45–8, argues that Shakespeare probably used this translation for *All's Well that Ends Well*.

ness. There is, however, one detail that makes it clear that the *Frederick of Jennen* version was familiar to him in some form: the Frenchman, Dutchman and Spaniard who appear in the Folio stage-direction at the head of Act 1, scene 4, though the last two do not figure in the dialogue, correspond to the 'Courant of Spayne' and 'Borcharde of Fraunce' of that version, whose paragraph-heading notes that the four merchants involved 'were of foure diuers londes'.[1] Though this is the only completely convincing piece of evidence for Shakespeare's use of this form of the story, it is reasonable, once the case has been established, to attribute to it certain variations from Boccaccio which might otherwise be considered Shakespeare's own invention. *Frederick of Jennen*, unlike Boccaccio, has the wager proposed by the villain and not by the hero. Nosworthy notes also that the wager itself, five thousand 'gyldens' on each side, corresponds to Posthumus's offer (1. 4. 131) to wager 'gold' to Jachimo's ten thousand ducats, whereas in Boccaccio the wager eventually agreed on is five thousand florins on Bernabò's side and a thousand on Ambruogiuolo's. On the other hand there is no dispute about the terms in *Frederick*, whereas *Cymbeline*, like Boccaccio, has a more dramatic sequence: in Boccaccio, Bernabò first offers to stake his head, and the five thousand florins is Ambruogiuolo's substitute for this. Though the attempted seduction by Jachimo is Shakespeare's addition, the villain in *Frederick* does at least speak with the wife, and it is this—not, as in Boccaccio, what he hears of her reputation—that makes him give up hope. The hero is 'more sorier then he was before' when he receives the news of his wife's death, and, as in *Cymbeline*, the tokens which the servant

[1] All quotations from the Appendix to Nosworthy's edition, reproducing the reprint of the 1560 edition in J. Raith's *Historie von den vier Kaufleuten* (1936).

offers are stained with blood, from a pet lamb which the wife had conveniently brought with her.[1] At the end, the villain confesses that he deserves death, whereas in Boccaccio he is struck dumb with shame. In the bedchamber scene the heroine is sleeping alone, as in *Cymbeline*, whereas in Boccaccio she has a little girl with her. But in general Shakespeare's agreements with Boccaccio against *Frederick* are more striking:[2] notably the light burning in the heroine's bedchamber (2. 2. 19), and the mole (2. 2. 38), for which *Frederick* has a black wart on the left arm. The presence of Philario in Act 2, scene 4 is of doubtful force. It contrasts with the stress on complete privacy in *Frederick*, but it is natural—though not, as Nosworthy thinks, necessary—to have Philario present as stake-holder, and Shakespeare departs from what is central to the story in Boccaccio: the presence of all the merchants who were there when the wager was made.

There is certainly not much in this part of *Cymbeline* which cannot be accounted for by Boccaccio and *Frederick* between them. But the possibility of a lost intermediate source, though regarded with healthy scepticism by recent scholars,[3] cannot be entirely dismissed. W. F. Thrall, to whom we owe the most careful

[1] Nosworthy seems fanciful in thinking that this detail may be echoed in 3. 4. 97.

[2] W. F. Thrall, *Studies in Philology*, XXVIII (1931), 646–7, notes these and some less important agreements.

[3] For example, Nosworthy, p. xx of his edition; F. P. Wilson, *Shakespeare Survey*, 3 (1950), 16; for a *commedia dell'arte* derivative of Boccaccio that is in some respects closer to *Cymbeline* than is either Boccaccio or *Frederick*, see the *scenario* of *La Innocencia Rivenuta* printed by K. M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy* (1934), II, 568–72, and discussed by F. D. Hoeniger, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, VIII (1957), 133.

survey of coincidences between the play and *Frederick*, was not himself convinced that either the latter or Boccaccio was a direct source, and was inclined, with Gaston Paris,[1] to believe in a lost English source. At this point, another analogue, the anonymous *Westward for Smelts*, becomes relevant. This was formerly put forward as a source, on the strength of Steevens's assertion that he had seen a 1603 edition; but the only surviving edition is dated 1620, and follows a Stationers' Register entry of January in that year.[2] The parallels with *Cymbeline* that are not present in Boccaccio and *Frederick* are rather more impressive in Thrall's summary than in the story itself, which is much farther from the other three versions than they are from each other. The whole scene is transferred to England in the Wars of the Roses, which leads Thrall to talk of an 'English historical background, with enveloping war action';[3] but the way in which the Boccaccian and the historical elements are related in *Cymbeline* makes it quite unlike *Westward for Smelts*, in which the historical setting is a mere backcloth and does not involve new plot-material. It is very hard to imagine a common source for *Cymbeline* and *Westward for Smelts* which would account for the slender resemblances between them and would at the same time be close enough to Boccaccio to account for the Boccaccian material in Shakespeare which *Westward for Smelts* completely lacks. That the 'actors [are] not merchants but of the gentry' is also a slender parallelism. In *Cymbeline*, the

[1] *Romania*, XXXII (1903), 481–551. H. G. Wright, *Boccaccio in England from Chaucer to Tennyson* (1957), p. 220, n. 3, writes that in *Miscellanea di studi critici edita in onore di Arturo Graf* (1903), which I have not seen, Paris 'had already modified his views'.

[2] Nosworthy, p. xix, n. 1, by an oversight, has 1619.

[3] Dowden, p. xxix of his edition, had also noted this.