

VOICES OF THE PRESENT AND PAST: EXAMINING SCHOLARLY IDENTITY
THROUGH THE ROMANCES OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

by

Zachary Glenn Smith

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Art

in

English

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 2015

©COPYRIGHT

by

Zachary Glenn Smith

2015

All Rights Reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DECONSTRUCTING THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION IN <i>TROILUS AND CRESSIDA</i>	12
Introduction.....	12
Queen Elizabeth and Cressida	14
Achilles and the Knight Errant	20
Troilus and Identity.....	27
Conclusion	33
3. PERICLES AND THE SIMULATION OF AUTHORITY	35
Introduction.....	35
Gower's Authority	38
Action: A Dumb Show and a Tilt	46
Conclusion	53
4. SEPARATING AGES IN <i>THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN</i>	56
Introduction.....	56
The Love Interests.....	59
Mars, Diana, and Venus.....	66
Classical, Medieval, Early Modern.....	72
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	77
REFERENCES CITED.....	80

ABSTRACT

The current academic climate has constructed a false binary between new-historicism and presentism. This thesis subverts the possibility of that binary distinction by pointing out that, according to the tenants of presentism, Shakespeare was a presentist before going on to illustrate how the notions of presentism can and must exist in relation with ideas of new-historicism rather than developing an illusionary dichotomy between the two. In this way, new-historicism and presentism become part of one conversation that helps the modern world to define itself rather than contradictory views of how to deal with the past. By seeing how Shakespeare put used history in order to define the present, in spite of his apparent efforts to separate the present entirely from the past, it becomes possible to see the present as in conversation with the past rather than separate from it. New-Historicism and presentism, then, exist within the same paradox, and, by recognizing this within the canonical figure of Shakespeare, scholarship can begin to work toward a unified conversation about how the present and the past define one another at the same time that they are separate.

INTRODUCTION

In their introduction to *Presentist Shakespeares*, Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes argue for presentism by stating that “[t]he present cannot be drained out of our experience” because “none of us can step beyond time” (3). Both Grady and Hawkes see cultural materialism, and subsequently new historicism, as deeply flawed because in an attempt to define the past based entirely on its own context, such critics erroneously believe that it is possible to separate the past from the present. Presentists such as Grady and Hawkes argue for a new perspective, a new understanding in which the present is recognized as the shaping factor that determines how a text is interacted with and interpreted. In other words, they argue that the present is inescapable and therefore should not be ignored as they see new materialists doing in their own form of criticism.

While Grady and Hawkes make a valid point, what they suggest is a kind of new historicism that does not connect to how new historicists view themselves. While new historicism does tend to focus more on the historical perspective of texts and where they were in time, it does not generally argue for a complete detachment from the present. Rather, as William E. Connolly suggests, in reference to new materialism, it “is the most common name given, to a series of movements in several fields that criticize anthropocentrism [and] rethink subjectivity” (1) by focusing instead on the role of the material objects instead of the human experience. In the same vein, new historicism looks to not ignore the present but to suggest that the past must have more weight than it has been previously given. New historicists do not argue for the past as the only perspective

from which a text can be read but seek to point out that the present and the voices of the present cannot be the only ones that are heard.

The problem that I see in each of these cases is that the two theories seem to be talking around one another. That is, I argue that the binary constructed between new historicism and presentism is not helpful, that, if examined closely, the two schools of thought bear similarities that would point to a much closer understanding between the two than has been previously suggested. In this thesis, I will show that the notions of presentism and new historicism are not entirely mutually exclusive but that they converge in a conversation actually rooted in historical perspective. Specifically, I look at how attempting to break with past historical/cultural/literary traditions as a way of privileging one's own historical moment is, in fact, something practiced by William Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries. Their attempts to do so, however, highlight the impossibility of their task and show the interconnected nature of past and present perspectives. In other words, I argue that presentism can only work by relating the present to the past and point out the false dichotomy that presentism and new historicism attempt to create.

In this thesis, I will look at three of William Shakespeare's plays in order to develop a sense of how I perceive the bard as following many of the same principles of presentism. At the same time, I will show that Shakespeare seen as a presentist presents a model by which what has been argued as two dichotomous ideologies that are at war with one another. Instead, I suggest that presentism exists as a part of new historicism attempting to throw light on the present more than the past but ultimately aware that any attempt to do so can only be done in relation to the past. While critics such as Grady and

Hawkes seem to suggest that their notion of presentist theory breaks from the flaws of new historicism, I argue that, in fact, their argument seems to have already been made by Shakespeare but in a way that perpetuates the importance of a historical perspective rather than eroding it.

In other words, he engaged with his own literary past in order to develop a sense of how its purpose rests within its ability to be of use to the present. For example, Shakespeare engaged with the medieval romantic tradition in a way that highlights the strategies of romance in order to ask questions of how the medieval tradition serves to support or hinder his own time. Thus, he became a part of the paradox of presentism. By romantic strategies, I refer to those elements of romance that can be found throughout literature but that inevitably get melded into the understanding of romance. Specifically, I refer to elements such as nostalgia, knightly errantry, courtly love, the deferral of sex, and divine inspiration. Each of these elements exists within the works of courtly romance that Shakespeare engages with, and each represents a part of the medieval ideology that Shakespeare explores in several of his plays. By reading his plays as arguments against the constructed nature of medieval romance, I show that Shakespeare engages with his own past in much the same way that presentists currently look at Shakespeare and show him as a model for how and why current scholarship must continue to look to the past. Shakespeare presents the paradox of presentism to the modern reader. While presentists and Shakespeare engage with texts in a way that suggests that only the present moment matters in interpretation, this is accomplished only by a return to the past. Though presentists want the present moment to have the only say in how a text functions, the present always references the

past. While presentists may assert that they can separate time into distinct periods, the ability to do so, as with Shakespeare, comes through a comparison to the past. Texts do not simply function in our time, but they work through an ambiguous collaboration of multiple time periods.

Early modern England was a period that had lost some of the confidence that it had in its rulers, a country not quite sure of its historical identity and uncertain and nervous about its place in the future. Authors and readers alike turned to the romantic tradition of Mallory and Caxton. They looked to their mythical identity as portrayed by the romances of Arthur and his knights and the symbols of British nobility that such figures conveyed (Ferguson).

William Shakespeare's plays, when seen as texts that use romantic strategies, can be used in order to look at the constructions of identity within early modern England and to develop a sense of early modern England as singularly placed within its own, specific reality. To do this, I look at three of Shakespeare's plays, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles*, and *Two Noble Kinsmen* in order to examine how each interacts both with Shakespeare's age and the past.

The three plays that I have just mentioned possess a similar quality: they all connect to the medieval tradition. *Troilus and Cressida* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* are adaptations of Chaucerian works, *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales* respectively, while *Pericles* derives from Book Eight of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Thus, each possesses a unique combination of medieval source material as well as early modern ideologies that Shakespeare wove together for his

contemporary audience. While other Shakespearean plays interact with the romantic tradition, these three in particular look at medieval texts, medieval texts that also look at their own pasts, creating a complex meta-examination that questions how and for what purpose identities are constructed. In other words, Shakespeare looks to his own literary past in order to examine how and why it may be dangerous for his modern world. At the same time, it is only by connecting to the earlier world that the present becomes more viable and, ultimately, constructs itself.

To this point, much scholarship has been devoted to the categorization of Shakespeare's plays. *Troilus* falls under the heading of tragicomedy (Cooper), *Two Noble Kinsmen* has been offered up as a romance, and *Pericles*, owing to the patterns that it uses, has been put into the category of romance as well. Thus all three are, in essence, romances of Shakespeare. While some scholarship has been devoted to how each of these plays connects to the past or challenges ideologies of the early modern period (Cooper, Sprang, Ortego), less work has been done on how Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights saw themselves as separate from the past and part of a unique present. This desire to be separate from the past comes at the cost of comparing themselves to that past, of actually connecting themselves with the thing that they want to disconnect from. To that end, I use one of the key elements of the strategy of romance, nostalgia, in order to point out how these three plays deconstruct notions of identity and authority based on the past and, at the same time, remain faithful to it. Nostalgia, here, does not deal with the present so much as it does with the construction of the past and follows closer on the heels of S. D. Chrostowska's definition. The past is irretrievable, and, subsequently, any

attempt to return to it occurs only in representation. Specifically, when I mention nostalgia, it refers to the concept that S. D. Chrostowska calls romantic nostalgia, a nostalgia that Chrostowska defines as being “rooted in an economy of representations in which the past is experienced as irretrievable” (64). In other words, the nostalgia of romance demands a realization that the past, though desired, can never quite be gotten back to. The ideals that are desired cannot be reacquired, and the present is left to simply desire what it can no longer have. That is, nostalgia does not compare the past to the present but suggests that the past exists as a simulation of the present.

To accomplish this goal, I first define what the strategy of romance looks like and how I see it working within *Troilus*, *Pericles*, and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. In each of the plays, Shakespeare presents several romantic strategies. In *Troilus*, the audience engages with the delay of desire in the form of Cressida, who initially seeks to forestall her sexual encounter with Troilus. They also encounter knightly virtue in the form of both Achilles and Troilus, who each magnify the constructed nature of martial courtesy. In *Pericles*, the audience encounters a John Gower as the Chorus along with two dumb shows and an absent joust that highlight the simulated nature of both the *auctor* and the tilts. In *TNK*, the notions of romantic and homosocial relationships come into play and interact with the religious elements of romance, though these are given a classical twist. In each case, the plays develop a sense of nostalgia for the past and a desire to return to a world that was somehow better than the current age in order to point out both the impossibility of returning to the past and the authors’ desires to remain grounded in their present. The identity of that present, though, can be recognized only with respect to this elusive past.

Nostalgia, then, shows the mingling of the romantic elements in the desire for a bygone age. It enables an author to examine the present in relation to the past and functions as a means by which medieval romances create worlds more desirable than the world outside of the stories. Barbara Fuchs provides an adequate starting point from which to build, suggesting that nostalgia challenges the ideologies of the present. She argues that “through the lens of nostalgia, the past can pose a significant challenge to the present” (7). The past does not build into present, but rather the present constructs simulations of the past.

I would build upon this idea and suggest that the nostalgia of romance is not simply built on representations of the past but, borrowing from Jean Baudrillard, simulacra which “seem to have referents (real phenomena they refer to), but they are merely pretend representations that mark the absence, not the existence of the objects they purport to represent” (1554). In other words, I suggest that Shakespeare and his coauthors interrogate the notion of nostalgia. Nostalgia does not simply look to a past that is irretrievable, but by trying to connect to that past and attempting to pay homage to it, the present becomes trapped in a simulation that hinders the current moment from becoming more than simply an echo of the past.

The first chapter of this thesis looks at how *Troilus and Cressida*, written by Shakespeare near the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, connects to the romantic ideals of early modern England. To accomplish this goal, Shakespeare reaches back to a writer closer to the medieval period upon whom he tries to model his play. He reaches back to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, placing himself perfectly within the tradition

of the medieval. This does not mean, though, that Shakespeare wanted to show the medieval as a golden age meant to be celebrated and aspired to. Rather, I argue that Shakespeare, in attempting to show how the early modern period can and should be disconnected from the past, inevitably had to immerse himself in it. Three characters in the play, Cressida, Achilles, and Troilus, each in their own way deconstruct the apparently solidified ideals of romance by forcing the audience to watch characters that do not meet with the ideals of romance while still functioning as a part of the medieval tradition. Shakespeare creates characters that strive to embody the romantic tradition and who fail to do so. Thus, each character represents a particular aspect of the romantic strategy, but by seeing their actions as simulations of the romance, and subsequently as part of a nostalgia of romance, the play sheds light on the impossibility of being a part of the romantic past.

Each character that I have chosen from *Troilus*, then, appears at first to build on the romantic tradition, but by the end of the play, they have each recognized the illusions that it presents. Interestingly, this can be accomplished only because Shakespeare constructs them as a part of the tradition that they are meant to deconstruct. In other words, *Troilus* can deconstruct the past precisely because it is a part of the past. While I argue that these characters are meant to show the impossibilities of romance, they can do so only in its guise.

By placing his play in the medieval world of romance, Shakespeare forces his contemporaries to deal with the fact that much of how they construct their identities is based on a notion of a world that even in Chaucer's time was seen as flawed. The

corresponding play shows the ideals of the medieval period as impossible illusions, as constructs of a past that did not exist, and, subsequently, as something not to be striven for. Shakespeare denies the ease and comfort of looking back to the recent past for comfort in the turbulent present. He evokes the same ideals as the presentists, but, interestingly, he does so paradoxically, by actually becoming a part of the tradition.

The second chapter looks at how Shakespeare builds on this concept and examines how his work with George Wilkins in *Pericles* attempts to redefine the constructed nature of literary authority. Specifically, I look at how the character of Gower and particular action sequences within the play, the dumb shows and the tilt, serve to deconstruct the notions of *auctoritas* that comes from the medieval period. To accomplish this goal, Shakespeare and Wilkins frame their play with a Chorus spoken by the medieval author of their source text, the previously mentioned John Gower. By placing Gower on stage and first giving him lines that suggest he has power over what happens on stage, the two playwrights build a façade that inevitably crumbles as the play proceeds. No sooner has Gower connected himself to his dead namesake than the playwrights force him to admit that any power that he does have comes from the audience rather than from some perceived connection to the past. However, in referencing Gower's power, Shakespeare and Wilkins validate the *auctoritas* that they at first attempt to deny. The audience of the early twenty-first century, then, begins to see the impossibility of severing its connection to the past.

At the same time, by using dumb shows to illustrate some of the action and by providing a joust that is never actually seen, the playwrights also manage to challenge

notions of theatrical and artistic authority that go beyond the *auctor*. In other words, they force the audience to see the moments in which the action takes place as merely part of another simulation, as a cleverly disguised one, but as a simulation none the less. Thus, two of the most idealized forms of authority within the early modern world, the *auctor* and the ritualized action, fall under scrutiny in *Pericles*. Rather than providing a means by which the audience may relinquish their authority over the world, the authors of the play suggest that the audience is in charge and that only the illusion of authority is given to the *auctor*. In reconstructing the dead Gower, Shakespeare and Wilkins point out the fact that *auctoritas* exists in simulation. Authors are constructed by their audiences rather than the other way around.

The final chapter of this thesis deals with another of Shakespeare's collaborative works, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a play that he coauthored with John Fletcher. In the third chapter, I investigate how Shakespeare and Fletcher develop the combination of Classical and medieval identities within early modern England deconstruct one another. Specifically, I look at how the play situates itself within a defined time and place by first bringing together notions of the Classical, medieval, and early modern worlds. In other words, the final chapter illustrates how unique Shakespeare's time was from those that preceded it. Rather than being a part of a flowing age from the past to the present, as suggested by Ruth Morse, I suggest that Shakespeare and Fletcher saw their time as distinct from prior eras. But that singularity came only through a comparison with prior ages.

To make their comparison, the two playwrights return to Chaucer, this time to use *The Canterbury Tales*, and more specifically *The Knight's Tale*, in order to connect to the medieval world and, at the same time, the Classical world that existed before it. By showing how each of these ideal time periods interacts with one another, Shakespeare and Fletcher take another step toward disconnecting their own time from its pasts and showing that such pasts merely stand as representations of the present, or more accurately as simulations of it. The past does not exist in the present as a guide for the present on how to act. Rather, according to Shakespeare and Fletcher, the past exists in illusion as an attempt to return to a Platonic ideal that leaves the present on the brink of self-destruction. As the early modern period attempts to construct itself through various forms of the past, these pasts collide. They do not work together, especially as the two playwrights portray them. Because of this incompatibility, the present is left without a foundation on which to build.

This thesis ultimately seeks, then, to look at how Shakespeare, both by himself and in collaboration with other authors, writes plays that are at one and the same time romantic and nostalgic. That is, the plays point out the inevitable severing that the present must have with the past if it is to survive while still paradoxically being connected to that past. Through each of these plays, Shakespeare connects to his past, but in doing so he does not provide a staged world in which the audience can grow comfortable and remember worlds that were and can then be strived for. Instead, he forces his audiences to look at the past as a thing in constant conflict with the present. While the initial instinct of the present is to look to the past in order to construct identities of the present,

Shakespeare and his fellow authors ask their readers and viewers to consider an alternative that the present must be built within and for itself. Thus, this thesis shows that, while it may be enticing, even alluring, to construct a present on the past, such constructs serve only to create simulations in the present. Though such fantasies can be intoxicating to observe, inevitably they become toxic and weaken the present rather than giving strength to it. Shakespeare would seem to be arguing for a separation of identities, much as presentists of today's academic environment. And yet, in order to do so, just as with other presentists, he must look to the past in order to make his point. Thus the past and present cannot be extricated from each other, but are always being defined by one another. By looking at how Shakespeare examines and even questions the possibilities of romance, scholars can begin to ask their own questions about temporality and how the past and present work in conjunction to define one another.

DECONSTRUCTING THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION IN *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*Introduction

In his 1990 essay “Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: *Troilus and Cressida*,” Eric Mallin suggests that Shakespeare used his play based on Chaucer’s poem to construct a world that reflected the political and ideological tensions of his time. That is, Mallin sees a connection between how Achilles acts toward the Greeks and how Robert Devereux treated Queen Elizabeth late in her reign. According to Mallin, “[the] factionalized Greeks encode a critique of Elizabeth’s failed political manipulations, but they more directly evoke the paralyzing self-interest of the Essex and Cecil groups” (170). Mallin asserts that the Greek faction in *Troilus and Cressida* can be seen as a mirror image of the power struggle that existed at the end of Elizabeth’s reign when she had lost much of her ability to entice men with her beauty. Furthermore, he suggests that, while the Greeks may mirror the rifts created by Elizabeth’s desire for power, they do not tell the whole story of English political identity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To understand the political climate more effectively, the Trojans must be seen as part of the puzzle as well. After all, it is the Trojans who “manifest the self-deceptive vogue of revived knighthood in the queen’s reign, but the woman, the supposed object of their destructive exercises, cannot be faulted for the attention...” (170). Mallin argues for a reading of *Troilus and Cressida* in which the warring societies of the play are each a part of the identity of the English aristocracy of Elizabethan England as it tried to construct its identity in relationship to the nostalgic ideals of chivalric romance. Yet, his

argument remains incomplete because it focuses on the chivalric representations of Essex and Cecil as men devoted to an ideal that cannot be attained as seen in the characters of Achilles and Hector rather than looking at how the use of the chivalric past connected early modern England to its history. He constructs an argument that centers on how the factious nature of the play was emblematic of the time and showed Essex's disillusionment with the throne. This argument does not explore how the romantic strategies of the play went beyond the idea of Essex and his relation to the Queen. His focus reflects the similarities of characters in fiction to those in history, but he only looks at two male characters. Mallin's argument remains incomplete, then, because it does not develop a sense of how the play deconstructs the chivalric ideal, more specifically, how Shakespeare uses his characters to show a construction of identity that is contingent upon the elusive past.

The representation of Elizabethan identity within *Troilus and Cressida* highlights how the English citizens, most notably the nobility, built its identity upon a glorified past. That is, it reflects the desire of early modern England to be a part of the romantic tradition, a tradition of chivalric knights and chaste ladies. England, in the waning years of Elizabeth's reign, sought to reassert itself as a power to comfort the growing unease of a country facing a future without an heir. Shakespeare, though, in reconstructing Geoffrey Chaucer's poem *Troilus* into a play, calls into question the formation of an identity built on a constructed past while at the same time exploring the constructed nature of that past.

To better understand how Shakespeare calls the past into question, I will show how three characters in *Troilus and Cressida* magnify the crisis of identity that plagues English society in late Elizabethan England. By looking at first Cressida's relation to Elizabeth and then the unique connections that Achilles and Troilus have to English society on a larger scale, I will show how Shakespeare constructs a play that calls into question the ability for a society to build its identity on the power of the past. If, as Marco Natali suggests, the presence of nostalgia is understood as both a faith in the past and a belief that the past is irretrievable, *Troilus* becomes a critique of the romantic ideology of the time.

The first examination of this chapter looks at how Cressida can be seen as a mirror of Queen Elizabeth and how their similarities reflect a growing understanding on Shakespeare's part, that the power of the Queen was in decline, and that the country as a whole was in danger because of the fact that the power of the ruler was based in a chivalric ideal. I will then illustrate Achilles' connections to the idea of the knight and the way that Shakespeare calls into question the protective power of the knight because that power is based in a nostalgic ideal. Finally, I will look at Troilus and see how he exemplifies the failed search for identity as a naïve child who constructs his own desired realities before they are stripped from him at the end of the play.

Queen Elizabeth and Cressida

Both Cressida and Elizabeth implement a key strategy of the romantic tradition, the deferral of sexual desire, in order to maintain their hold on power. Thus each

represents the strategy of continued delay that exists within chivalric romance. The Queen rules as long as she keeps men fighting for her hand. In much the same way, Cressida's power endures so long as she can withstand her own desires and deny any man access to sexual fulfillment. Both the Queen and the character represent a desire for authority and power, but a desire that is only satisfied by forestalling the desires of men.

Cressida makes her first appearance of the play in Act I Scene 2, and it is not long after that that she and her Uncle are caught in a conversation about the merits of the noble knights as they pass by on stage. As Troilus and the others parade across the stage, Pandarus seeks to convince his niece of the merits of Troilus the knight, but she will apparently have none of it. Only after Pandarus has left and Cressida is left alone with her servant does she admit that "...more in Troilus thousand fold I see/Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be" (1.2.275-6). But, though she is infatuated with the young man, she admits that her desire for him is somewhat quelled by her knowledge that "[men] prize the thing ungained more than it is" (1.2.280). The concept of women as possessing at least a kind of power in the deferral of sexual desire perfectly reflects the ideology that surrounded the Queen during her reign. As Mallin notes, "[the] fact that men prize the thing ungained, or desire what they do not have, was the motivational and the regulatory basis of Elizabethan factionalism *and* chivalry" (157 emphasis original). In other words, Cressida is a perfect characterization of the Elizabethan idea of the Queen and the power that she conveyed throughout her life. Queen Elizabeth used the deferral of favor in order to develop rivalries among nobles who might have otherwise caused her harm or usurped the throne. By allowing men such as William Cecil and Robert Devereux to compete for

her affections, the Queen constructed the means by which the men lost their own power in order to better cement her own.

Cressida's speech becomes more complex when the word prize becomes price in the quarto of the play. While prize denotes that men place value on acquiring female affection, price further amplifies the connection between monetary value and the woman. Value, in this instance, denotes power. While the woman has value, she has authority. Thus, the use of either price or prize suggests that Cressida wants to maintain her own relevance. As she gives up the prize, the price disappears. Immediately, the value disappears, and becomes part of a romantic nostalgia "in which the past is experienced as irretrievable" (Chrostowska 64). Inevitably, Cressida's words develop a further understanding that her identity is constructed on the perceived value of her virginity while it still exists.

The problem comes, then, in that both the power of the Queen and Cressida exists only in limited deferral. That is, while the infinite deferral might work in theory, it does not work in actuality. Cressida loses much of her power in the third act of the play when she sleeps with Troilus. By allowing the knight to complete his desires, Cressida inevitably dissolves any chance she had of maintaining control of the situation. Cressida's actions early in the play suggest a desire to maintain a semblance of independence from the pull of male society that surrounds her. She strives for the power of what Barbara Fuchs terms the delay or postponement of the erotic desires of the knight. Cressida can only have power within the scope of her ability to deny pleasure to the knight who would be her lover. Yet, when she allows herself the pleasure of the same

sexual encounter, it is not Troilus who suffers the loss of power nor the threat of degradation should he be unfaithful. She is the only one who, it seems, can be a part of that trap, and so it is she who must promise that “among false maids in love...let them say...‘As false as Cressid’” (3.2.180b, 185a, 186a). Cressida’s only power once she has succumbed to the lure of Troilus’s love is to curse herself should she be less than faithful to him. She no longer possesses the ability to control her encounters with the knight but can only hope that she does not misstep and dishonor herself.

In much the same way, as Queen Elizabeth ages, her ability to control the bittering factions within her own kingdom begins to lessen. Near the end of her life, though she may wish to project the same sense of mastery through desire that she held in her prime, much of Elizabeth’s power in her later life rests on the delicate balance between the facts that at one time she was beautiful, that she could defer sexual attraction, and that there are still men, like William Cecil, who remember that beauty and are faithful to it, men who still believe in the power of her beauty. The final years of Elizabeth’s life, much like the middle of *Troilus*, exhibit the temporality of her power. That is, the last years of her reign coincide with a time when she clearly does not have the power that she once had. She can no longer withhold erotic fulfillment from the men around her because she cannot create the desire that needs to be withheld. Her ability to create desire vanishes and, with it, the fiction of her power collapses. While she can still attempt to entice them, the inevitable loss of her beauty denies Queen Elizabeth the ability to leverage young knights against one another so that she may maintain control of the throne.

Interestingly enough, as Cressida nears the end of her play and Elizabeth her life, the apparent loss of power that each suffers becomes a romantic illusion. While it is easy to believe that each holds a modicum of power, Cressida early in the play and Elizabeth early in her rule, in the end, I would argue that each builds her power on a romantic illusion, on a desire to return to the power that is held earlier. For Cressida, this power exists in act one before she and Troilus meet in the fateful bedroom. The Queen's power disappears more gradually as she grows old with time.

The illusion seems most obvious with Cressida at the end of the play when she goes with Diomedes to the Grecian camp. While the scene has been described as a challenge to romantic ideology in which Troilus watches "Cressida's semi-reluctant attempts to resist Diomedes demands, a reluctance barely distinguishable from seduction" (Cooper 226), it also bespeaks the idea that women were property at the time, meaning that Cressida never had a say in the matter at all. Her only choices would have been to run away with Troilus or go with Diomedes, but Shakespeare denies her that choice. While the beginning of the story may suggest that there was a possibility for Cressida to maintain her own individuality by perpetuating the delay of her union with Troilus, as the end of *Troilus* suggests, the choice is never really her own. The power that she desires exists only romantically, in a belief that she can control some part of her life, a love relationship perhaps. But the end of the play brings that very idea into stark reality, and the audience sees that Cressida does not get to choose who she is with, nor does she have any power. Instead, she must be content with her role as "false Cressid" and leave the stage in ridicule.

In a similar vein, though perhaps not to the same extent, Elizabeth suffers from the same illusions. That is not to say that she did not control England. I do suggest, however, that Elizabeth's power comes from the illusions that she creates around herself rather than from any power that she may have had herself. That is, her ability to rule England comes from an ability to make sure that almost everyone else is too busy proving that they are worthy to take her hand in marriage and eventually take control of the country. While Elizabeth may at first appear to possess the power, it is by allowing men such as Essex and Cecil to war with one another for her favor that she can maintain her control. Once she loses her power over Essex, the tenuous grasp that she maintains on the throne becomes threatened. It also points to the fact that her authority rests on illusions, on the belief that she can bestow her favor on knights and that such bestowal is desirable.

While both Cressida and Elizabeth appear to have power, in the end that power comes into question. Each strives for control in her own world and achieves that control to an extent, but closer analysis reveals that each does so only by means of idealizing her role within the larger framework of the play or of English society. That is, they each make it impossible for the men around them to attain what is desired in order to hold some authority. Yet, when the ability to deny what was previously desired is taken away from them, then each woman begins to desire that same power which has inevitably been lost. Cressida looks back to Troilus, even if it is half-heartedly, saying "Troilus farewell! One eye yet looks on thee,/ But with my heart the other eye doth see" (5.2.113-4). Cressida attempts to keep her allure for Troilus just as Elizabeth seeks to sustain her

allure. But when they do, they are being nostalgic, desirous of a past that they cannot return to and that was, more accurately, never really present. Both Shakespeare's Cressida and Elizabeth reflect a nostalgic ideal, a belief that their identities can be constructed on a historical power. The faith in that power, and the realization that it can never truly be attained, are what make both Elizabeth and her counterpart Cressida victims of a romantic nostalgia that they cannot recognize but that Shakespeare illustrates quite effectively.

Achilles and the Knight Errant

Seeing Cressida as a reflection of Queen Elizabeth and her power in late Tudor England does not take too much of a stretch of the imagination. They are parallels in many quite obvious ways. It becomes more difficult, however, to assert that Achilles exhibits the same nostalgic pattern as Cressida. He is not a character that can be easily equated with a single individual in Elizabethan society. While Mallin suggests that he represents, in some ways, the Earl of Essex, who would often sulk and pout when he was out of favor, the two are not quite so similar as Cressida and the Queen. At the same time, Mallin's argument raises a chicken and egg conundrum. Did Shakespeare construct his Achilles around the fractious example of Devereux, or had Devereux already constructed his own identity based on the mythic figure of the *Iliad*? Both questions lead to an idea of Classical influence on early modern England. In other words, Mallin's analysis, while wrapped in the garb of chivalric nostalgia, seems more capable of connecting Elizabethan culture to the Classical than it does to the more contemporary ideology of the medieval

period. This works for his purposes because Achilles sulks just as effectively in the Classical tradition. This connection to an even further past shows Shakespeare's continued examination of why the present always desires to look into the past. Connecting to the Classical period, allows Mallin to show that Essex takes his cues from a Greek tradition, but by placing Achilles in the medieval world, it also becomes necessary to establish a line between the hero and the chivalric knights of romance. To better connect Shakespeare with the medieval tradition, then, it will be more effective to connect the knight Achilles to a knight within the chivalric tradition: for example Gawain from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

In *Troilus*, Achilles represents both the factiousness of Essex and the constantly reaching nostalgic desire of Shakespeare's audience. At the beginning of the play, Achilles is an audience member. He watches as the violence takes place around him. Achilles' inaction exists because of a naiveté that develops a belief in his ability to still attain the past that he desires. He can still be the hero that he wants to be, a hero that embodies the grandeur of myth. In Act I Scene Three, paradoxically, Achilles remains an inactive participant of the war, while still maintaining a desire that the men around him should praise him for his greatness. It is because Achilles sees that he is needed that he is able to stay away from confrontation and fill his time with idle revelry and Patroclus. Only after the Greeks manage to convince Achilles that he might lose his standing amongst the people and after Ulysses reminds him that

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion
A great-sized monster of ingratitude.
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are

Devoured as fast as they are made, forgot
 As soon as done. Perseverance, dear my lord,
 Keeps honour bright; to have done is to hang
 Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
 In monumental mock'ry (3.3.146-54).

Thus, the cunning Ulysses cleverly connects Achilles' desire for fame with the knowledge that only men of action gain the fame that he seeks. Ulysses connects his words to the idea of chivalry with a note about rusty mail that echoes the chivalric knight who has lost his sense of purpose and so cannot be a part of the tradition any longer. At the same time, Achilles is made to feel that his inaction produces a counter desire for Ajax's fame. With the not-so-subtle addition that the men have begun to view Ajax in the light that they originally held only for Achilles, the warrior begins to stir from his inactivity. The threat of Ajax usurping his position at the head of the army, along with Patroclus's begging, force Achilles to act, and the first thing that he does is request that Patroclus find Thersites and ask the other Greek to "invite the Trojan lords after combat/ To see us here unarmed" (3.3.235-6a). Achilles' request reflects the chivalric ideal of nobility both within and outside the realm of combat. His invitation works as a means of allowing the Trojans and Greeks to meet on friendly ground in spite of the war that rages between them. These words paint a picture of an Achilles who wishes to be remembered as a chivalrous knight, as the kind of knight who knows that it is his place to be a part of the battle and, at the same time, to be a kind host to both his friends and his enemies.

Yet, Achilles does not only battle with the desire to be remembered as a great warrior. He also must confront the dichotomous binary that exists between the love of his

lady and the love for battle. In Act V Scene One, he receives a letter from Hecuba that he describes as

“A token from her daughter, my fair love.
 Both taxing me and gaging me to keep
 An oath that I have sworn. I will not break it.
 Fall Greeks; fail, fame; honour, or go or stay;
 My major vow lies here; This I’ll obey” (5.1.39-43).

These words serve to better magnify the struggle that exists in Achilles’ nature. He seeks to be the knight of virtue, the knight who chooses his lady over combat, but, by doing so, he also falls prey to the notion that he cannot be a knight, cannot achieve his destiny and gain fame so long as he is unwilling to meet Hector on the battlefield. Polyxena’s token signifies the struggle between the lover and the fighter that both exist within Achilles, and his words show that he is attempting to be the knight who loves his mistress more than he loves combat. He seeks to be the knight that is pulled away from confrontation because of romance, but in the end he fails.

Achilles’ actions in both the beginning and the middle of the play suggest his naiveté, a similar mindset similar to that exhibited by Cressida early in the play when she speaks of being able to deny Troilus and so hold onto the kind of power that she believes she has. And, just as with Cressida, Achilles soon falls from his ideological perch into a world of harsh reality. In Act V Scene Eight, the warrior inevitably debases himself through murder. Rather than following the Classical convention of the *Iliad* and letting Achilles avenge Patroclus’s death in a one-on-one confrontation with Hector, Shakespeare reconstructs the encounter so that Achilles commands the Myrmidons to murder an unarmed Hector. It is only after the foul deed that Achilles reminds his men to

flee from the scene of the crime and tell the story of how ““Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain”” (5.8.14). By having Achilles as the perpetrator of a murder plot rather than the victor in a battle of heroes, Shakespeare denies the epic hero the place that he would have in legend, but the playwright also puts forth how Achilles came to be seen as the slayer of Hector.

Yet, by taking the action away from Achilles’ sword and instead putting it in his words, Shakespeare forces the Greek to live in a nostalgic simulation. That is, by making Achilles a murderer, and one that does not even possess the courage to draw his own blade, Shakespeare calls into question Achilles’ identity as mythic hero. When Achilles compounds his actions with a desire to be known as the hero that has slain Hector, his claim becomes an attempt at securing a simulation of romance. Achilles creates his own nostalgia. While he wishes to be known as the man that kills Hector and subsequently gain the repute that goes along with the deed, Shakespeare denies him this, instead forcing the hero to construct an identity from actions that are not present in the play. Achilles moves from being a hero of myth to being a knight in search of an identity, a heroic identity, but an identity nonetheless. By reconstructing the past so that it does not mesh with what is remembered, Achilles (or Shakespeare through Achilles) denies the discovery of identity for his audience. He does not allow them the comfort of a supposedly known past.

The Achilles of the play moves from a character who is so sure of his place in history that he is willing to remain inactive for long stretches of the war, comfortable in the knowledge that the others will eventually need him, to a character who knows that he

cannot best Hector in combat, as seen in Act V Scene Six. Why else would he desire to murder the Trojan by using his Myrmidons? Achilles' actions at the end of the play echo with nostalgic intent. The Greek attempts to create the honor that he knows he can never have, to reacquire what was lost, but in doing so, he irrevocably denies himself the ability to reach back to his chivalric past. Though the Myrmidons may say that Achilles is the one who has bested Hector, the simulated construction of the play denies that claim. Instead, Achilles becomes another figure attempting to remain faithful to a past that did not exist and knowledgeable of the fact that he will never attain the identity that he desires to have in the beginning of the play.

Achilles would fall within the same kind of identity crisis as the Earl of Essex, who sought to win the favor and desire of Queen Elizabeth only to find that, in the end, his efforts would have been in vain. The Earl of Essex, though, also connects to a literary past, to a medieval tradition of romance. Thus, it is also important to recognize Achilles' connection to that romantic tradition and how it shapes the character that Achilles aspires to be. Achilles also echoes the transformation of Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In the story, Gawain initially represents the apparent ideal of knightly virtue. He is humble, but willing to step in and save face for the king when it is necessary. As the play progresses, however, it becomes apparent that Gawain strives for an identity within the chivalric tradition that cannot be had. In other words, though he may appear to be the valiant knight who is tempted by the lady and wins her favor, who travels alone on a grand quest and bravely faces death, and who remains faithful to his religion throughout, he cannot because the beliefs on which he bases his ideology are rooted in simulations of

the past. The simulations exist most obviously within the walls of Camelot where the knights play at wars and courting. Inside the castle walls, Gawain and his companions seek to be the ideal knights to find their own places within the medieval past, but their beliefs are immediately called into question by the hulking figure of the Green Knight. Though he may at first be portrayed as the perfect knight who lives up to the exemplary ideal that the Round Table sets, both his actions throughout the story and his eventual donning of the green sash suggest that the ideals in which he places his faith are an illusion. Gawain, as with Achilles, is a part of the society that his author seeks to question. Gawain and Achilles stand as reminders that the ideals that they represent and strive toward are unattainable.

The fact that Gawain would want to wear the green sash at the end of the tale as a constant reminder of his failure should come as no surprise, then. It is both a reminder of his failure to live up to the ideal of the knight, and it also keeps in his mind the fact that the identity he wants cannot be, if only because it never was in the first place. Much like Achilles who constructs his own identity on nostalgic illusion, Gawain does the same by realizing that he can be faithful to the ideals that he upholds, but he does so with the knowledge that he can never attain that goal. Achilles builds his legend in attempt to gain honor that he does not deserve, and Gawain is given a similar favor when the men and women of Camelot praise him for facing death at the hands of the Green Knight, though he does not seem to want it, but each suffers under the realization that the past, while desirable, is out of reach. Though they may be knights in name, and though they may wish to be a part of the chivalric tradition that the title entails, both Achilles and Gawain

exhibit the nostalgic foresight to recognize the impossibility of becoming the knights constructed within the chivalric tradition, if only because the ideals of chivalric knighthood are, by definition, unattainable.

While Shakespeare places his play in the Classical tradition and interrogates it by changing Achilles' actions, he also manages to challenge the medieval constructs of knightly virtue in revival in the early modern period. Stories such as *Gawain* from the medieval period recognized the constructed nature of chivalry and the impossibilities of maintaining the ideology that knighthood represented. Through *Troilus*, Shakespeare maintains that same tradition of challenging constructed virtues. By pointing out that the medieval world already saw the knight as constructed, Shakespeare can show the cracks that begin to show in the façade of identities built on fantasies of prior beliefs.

Troilus and Identity

If Achilles functions as a means of questioning identity through nostalgia in *Troilus and Cressida*, much as Gawain does in *The Green Knight* by showing the transformation of the character from a knight who believes in his ability to attain the chivalric past to one filled with nostalgic melancholy, then Troilus is the next stage in that development. Achilles allows Shakespeare to show the transformation from naiveté to nostalgia replete with melancholy, an understanding that the past is unattainable. Troilus takes that conception a step further and both reflects the impossibility of attaining the nostalgic past while illustrating that such a past was only ever desirable within the limits of a particular romantic ideology. Troilus is still nostalgic, still faithful to the

chivalric ideal and sure that he can never attain it, but his loss of innocence comes with the birth of a realization that the past he desired in the early portions of the play is no longer attractive to him.

In the early moments of the play, Troilus, much like Cressida and Achilles, exhibits his naïve nature by professing to Pandarus his infatuation with Cressida. As Helen Cooper notes in her analysis of the play's connection to Chaucer, though the Troilus of the poem is one who idealizes love when he looks on Cressida, "Shakespeare's Troilus' idealism relates not to love, but to sensuality; he is overwhelmed not by emotion but by the prospect of sex, and it is that that fuels his lyric flights in a play that is singularly short of them" (224). Still, Troilus is a character who has an ideal form in his head, an ideal that he aspires to, at least at the beginning of the play. Troilus himself notes that Cressida "is stubborn-chaste against all suit.../Her bed is India; there she lies a pearl" (1.1.95, 100), effectively bringing forward characteristics that are not quite Cressida's, as can be seen later in the same Act when she professes that she is in love with Troilus but does not want to succumb to that love for fear of losing her power. Troilus bestows virtues and praises on Cressida because she is beautiful, not because he knows anything about her. He puts her on a pedestal, from which she can only fall. He idolizes her and creates the very means by which she will eventually disappoint him and become the false Cressida that he so abhors at the end of the play. In the beginning, though, he exists in a blissful delirium, believing that she can be a beautiful, chaste, faithful lover who does not have to fall under the sway of the perils of her position in

society. He thinks that he can create a romantic relationship much like those seen in other chivalric romances and that he and Cressida can live “happily ever after.”

The first hint that he may be mistaken comes in Act III Scene Two, in which Troilus and Cressida construct the means of their fidelity to one another. In the scene, Troilus’s vow is the antithesis to what Cressida is forced to promise. Instead of focusing on the fact that he might be unfaithful to her, Troilus’s only promise of devotion is that when other lovers meet they might “[a]pprove their truth by Troilus” (3.2.164a). Immediately, Troilus takes the role of the virtuous lover, the one who will be faithful no matter the obstacles that he faces, and the world will come to see his love as the measure by which all true and faithful love should be measured. Troilus does not allow his name to become synonymous with the false lover, but takes the name of the pitied party. While it could be argued that this is merely a case of Shakespeare remaining true to his source text, it must also be understood that “Chaucer had presented her much more sympathetically than either of his own sources or any of the later surviving versions until Dryden. That sympathy was a key element of his reworking of the whole narrative” (Cooper 223). Shakespeare, faithful to his source in Chaucer, continues this trend of sympathy for the Cressida character, but he also denies his Troilus the replacement of secular love with divine love that Chaucer is willing to give. Troilus, who can be seen as desirous of the ideal romantic relationship found within chivalric romance, sees that idealism shattered when Cressida is given to Diomedes. Though Shakespeare may present an equally sympathetic Cressida throughout most of the play, without the end that

Chaucer presents, her inability to be with Troilus stings sharper and intensifies the flawed representations of chivalry that exist within and external to *Troilus*.

But why does he allow Troilus so much sympathy at this point of the play? Surely Shakespeare could have easily created a Cressida that is more morally ambiguous than the woman in Act III Scene Two. In the very least, he could have constructed a scene in which both characters promise devotion and both face the threat of eternal shame should they stray. But instead, Troilus becomes the very definition of faithfulness while Cressida is made to wallow in the mire of falsehood. So why does he do it?

The answer comes, I argue, in the final scene of the play in which Troilus, abandoned by a Cressida who really had no choice in the matter, comes to his less naïve conclusions about chivalric romance. As the play comes to a close and Troilus thinks of Cressida's unfaithfulness for a final time, he becomes irate. In his rage at his brother's murder at the hands of Achilles, he professes to the absent murderer that:

I'll through and through you! And though great-sized coward,
No space of earth shall sunder our two hates;
I'll haunt thee like a wicked conscience still,
That mouldeth goblins swift as frenzy's thoughts...
Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe (5.10.26-29, 31).

Two things in this speech need to be studied for this analysis of romance. First, Troilus professes his hate, an emotion that until that very moment would not seem to fit with his love of Cressida. More importantly, it breaks him from the romantic tradition by allowing Troilus to disconnect himself from the woman. In chivalric tradition, when a knight has professed his love for a woman, and when she has accepted him, the knight is bound to her for the remainder of his life, whether she chooses him or not. Troilus's violent

outrage falls well short of the ideal that he proposes to uphold at the beginning and middle stages of the play. His rage consumes him and allows the character to focus on revenge rather than on the love of his lady. He has lost the ability to truly be in love because only ire remains. Thus, Shakespeare interrogates the assumption that two lovers must have a connection even in absence. Second, there is a threat of haunting that exists in this piece which I will touch on in more detail shortly.

Does this newfound jealousy exist within the realm of romantic nostalgia, however? I argue that it does, and that argument is centered on his threats to haunt Achilles. Troilus is not a character that should be considered the exemplary knight, but Shakespeare's words suggest a character that conveys a desire for knightly virtue. Yet, as the play reaches its conclusion, Shakespeare points out to his audience that the world of Troilus and Cressida is one of simulation built on nostalgia. Though Troilus represents a naïve belief in chivalry at the beginning of the play, by the end Shakespeare forces his audience to question the certainty of that chivalry. What remains, though, are both the faith and mourning of Marcos Natali's nostalgia. Troilus exhibits rage, rather than melancholy, in recognizing that he cannot get back to the world that he desired in the first place, but he also recognizes that he can make others faithful to it. It does not matter to him that that faith comes in the haunting of others so that they too will remember. Troilus's words suggest that he will not forget the past, and that he will assure that Cressida suffers the same fate. His threat of haunting is a threat of eternally remembering the abandoned past and never being able to return to it.

Yet, at the same time that he comes to understand the nostalgia of the world that he has created, Troilus also manages to stumble upon the other important factor, that of the nostalgic ideal of the moment. That is, his words in this passage prove that he understands that the world in which he lived was based on a nostalgic representation of the past, an idealization built on his own preconceived notions of an ability to reawaken a past that was irretrievable. Interestingly, in saying this, he also, perhaps inadvertently, suggests that the nostalgia of his moment was just that, a nostalgia for a very particular person in a particular time.

As the play ends, Troilus is left in a state of “perpetual postponement” (Fuchs 15), never really able to complete his romantic quest. Interestingly, though, Troilus would seem to be anything but the romantic knight. He is ruled by a passion for violence rather than a passion for love. It is a passion that shows a reaction against the tradition of nostalgia, shattering the faith to a past through the violent outburst that results from his realization that what is desired can never be had. Going further, though, Troilus does not just embody a sense of nostalgia, but a sense that that nostalgia is incredibly personal, meant for and experienced by an individual in a very particular way. Troilus experiences it differently from others because his character is different from the others. While he may seem to be a character that can fall under the heading of knight errant like Achilles or Hector, in the play Troilus is a character that experiences the romance differently and who reacts to it differently from those around him.

Conclusion

Cressida, Achilles, and Troilus each help to show how Shakespeare understood the difficulties that his own time had in engaging with its medieval past. When this play was first performed, Queen Elizabeth was near the end of her reign and on the decline. The political climate, as Mallin suggests, was rife with dissension and infighting, but it was the kind of dissension and infighting that came from trying to create an identity built on illusions. Elizabeth sought to maintain the control that she had held over her subjects as a young, beautiful monarch, Essex attempted to be the chivalric knight, and the entire country sought to find an identity that seemed based in the medieval understanding of what it was to be English. The problem with this, as Shakespeare so effectively points out, was that power and identity in late Tudor England seemed to be constructed on the ghosts of the past. England was haunted by what it was and thought it could be again rather than realizing that it never quite could get back to that thing that it wanted to be.

Shakespeare's nostalgia does more than simply call into question the present. Though nostalgia may "pose a significant challenge to the present" (Fuchs 7), in *Troilus* nostalgia challenges the past as much as it does the present. Thus, while nostalgia creates a means by which the less attractive notions of a particular time period can be challenged, this same notion must be taken with a grain of salt, as Shakespeare demonstrates in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Shakespeare's dual interrogation of identity formation in the play comes from his ability to both point out that his contemporary audience was trying to develop an identity based on a past that they could never find, while also showing them that the past they

were building on exhibited their own ideals. In other words, the nostalgic representations of romance that Shakespeare gives his audience in *Troilus and Cressida* show that the play recognized that it was a part of a tradition at the same time that it was a part of its own temporal identity. Much as Shakespeare saw his contemporaries struggling to create their own identities and construct a sense of security within the past, his characters in this play exhibit a developed understanding of the past as a romantic illusion. The need for a connection to a past comes with the price of building on shadows, of trying to build on an illusory foundation. The ideals that are placed upon it are those of the present. Shakespeare recognizes this in *Troilus* and seeks to show how the attempt for that tenuous comfort only leads to a more destructive future.

PERICLES AND THE SIMULATION OF AUTHORITY

Introduction

Pericles follows the pattern of the works set forth in this thesis. It continues the tradition of Shakespeare reaching back into the medieval tradition in order to supply a story for his contemporary audience while at the same time attempting to question this very practice. According to Suzanne Gossett, “[two] versions of the story [of Apollonius] fed into the play. The first appears in book 8 of John Gower’s English tetrameter poem, the *Confessio Amantis*” (71) and was printed in 1483. The other was a prose romance by Laurence Twine entitled *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* printed in 1559. For this analysis, though, the first source remains the most important because it falls closer to the medieval period and because Gower serves as the Chorus to the play, allowing for a more direct connection to the older text than to the newer.

In his article “Never Fortune did Play a Subtler Game: The Creation of ‘Medieval’ Narratives in *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*,” Felix Sprang argues that “[the] foregrounding of chance events and the episodic nature of Shakespeare’s late plays certainly construct ‘medieval’ characters driven by Fortuna and they create a ‘medieval’ world ruled by fatum” (Sprang 125). In short, Sprang argues that the epic nature of Shakespeare’s last plays, specifically *Pericles*, functions as a means of constructing a medieval identity on the Elizabethan stage. In response to this idea, I argue that, by using a nostalgic lens to look at the play, the very possibility that Shakespeare constructs a ‘medieval’ world filled with ‘medieval’ characters is challenged to the point that the

“stereotypical view of the Middle Ages” that Sprang sees Shakespeare and Wilkins presenting is deconstructed. In fact, far from constructing the stereotype, Shakespeare shows how illusive and ultimately illusionary the medieval identities that the early modern period is built on are.

This chapter looks at Gower as the narrator in the story. I also examine the actions of the dumb show and tilts that the play uses in order to demonstrate how Shakespeare and Wilkins challenge the simulated construction of authority. In other words, this chapter seeks to disavow the notion that Shakespeare and Wilkins constructed this play in order to connect with more of the medieval tradition. Rather, I argue that they use that tradition to show its contingent nature paradoxically making them a part of history at the same time that they try to get away from it. Without the audience, the medieval tradition goes nowhere, and through Gower and three very specific action sequences, the playwrights negotiate a frontier in which the audience takes over authority and is no longer dependent on the past in order to form its identity. In fact, I will argue that *Pericles* shows the dangers of constructing identity based on the past because to do so is to lose any contact with a sense of what Jean Baudrillard would call the Real.

In the first section of this chapter, I look at how Gower’s accession of the power to sing is contingent on the audience’s belief in Gower’s ability to bring about the action of the play. If his words are seen as an assumption of nostalgic identity, of an identity built on the shadows of a past that cannot be attained, then the power to construct the play for the audience disappears as Gower becomes another figure attempting to hold his authority while it inevitably slips away. Gower’s voice of authority from the past

disintegrates as his claims to authority are seen as idealized rather than actual, as an attempt for a nostalgic past rather than trying to connect to any kind of medieval past that ever existed.

In the second section, I look at how the dumb shows and the tilting serve as the means by which looking at the play as simulation further deconstructs the identity that the perceived authority of the play constructs, challenging the authority that the early modern world placed on ritualized medieval traditions such as jousts. That is, the actions of the play serve to highlight how constructed the identity of the medieval period is and how nostalgic the audience's perceptions of the medieval must be to look on simulations as a source of identity. When the actions within *Pericles* are seen as being idealized, the actions of the play lose their authority and become simulacra of authority similar to Gower's *auctoritas*.

The conclusion of this chapter looks at how the sense of authority that is challenged in the first two sections builds to encompass the audience as well. That is, by first challenging Gower and then destabilizing the supposed safety of the dumb shows, *Pericles* builds to suggesting that the constructions of authority which the audience applies to external forces can be seen as illusions because the audience chooses to base its identity on simulations of the past, on characters and actions that are not real but have been taken as such. The audience willingly loses its authority and so begins to deconstruct its own authority.

By developing each of these constructions of identity and power individually, I will show how each is just a construct, just a figment of nostalgic idealization that occurs

within the play. Shakespeare and Wilkins challenge key pillars of authority within the text and, by doing so, question the possibility of ever developing an authority that is based in the nostalgic past. The audience, in giving away its authority to simulations, endangers itself and weakens its identity. At the same time that they do this, the playwrights give twenty-first century scholars a model on which to build current understandings of the past and of authority. If Gower cannot be trusted as an authority by Shakespeare's and Wilkins' audience, then the same can be said of the two authors that gave Gower life. At the same time, as I shall show, it is only possible to understand the past as separate and simulated by putting it in relation to the present. Thus, even if the past is only ever made up of simulations constructed by the present, the present defines itself based on its relationship with those constructs.

Gower's Authority

In the first lines of the play, Gower confronts the audience and proclaims that “[t]o 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” (1.0.1-4). Gower, in his initial statement, lays claim to the ability to convey the meaning of the play to the audience. He arrives on stage to assert his authority and, as Suzanne Gossett notes in her introduction to the text, “reappears between sections to remind his listeners that he controls the narrative” (82). Gower seems to suggest a notion of *auctor* similar to that of the Medieval view of the author in which “the human author of Scripture has no power to originate, and his text derives from the creativity and authority (*auctoritas*) of God” (Burke).

Gower serves the role of creator within the confines of the play, rising from the dead in order to lend the ability to tell the story of Pericles to a new audience. According to Gossett, then, Gower is both the initial voice of the play, the chorus that sets the action into motion, and the echo throughout the rest of the play that the ancient voice remains strong and steadfast throughout, determined to shape how the audience perceives the play and constructs its meaning.

This analysis appears almost too obvious, though, and does not take into account the many instances in which Gower himself professes a need for the audience to be happy so that the show might go on. As he says only a few lines further on, “[if] you, born in these latter times/ When wit’s more ripe, accept my rhymes.../ I life would wish, and that I might/ Waste it for you like taper light” (1.0.11-12, 15-16). While the play professes to desire the pleasure of the audience, that desire comes from following the story that the Chorus constructs. Gower appears, and the first thing that he does is to make sure the audience knows who is in charge of the action. He is. Those watching the play must inevitably bow to his will and either be entertained or spend the majority of their time at the theater in disappointment. Yet within moments, Gower must concede that it is only by the grace of the audience that his power actually remains.

While an argument can certainly be made that Gower attempts to create power for himself at the beginning of the play, and while the character may continually reassert his intentions of authority, as I have shown, by looking at the lines more closely, the certainty of that power and authority becomes less concrete. If Gower’s appearance on the stage “insists on correspondences between past and present... [and] collapse[s] the

distinctions between them altogether” (Munro 105), then the character should not attempt to use both dumb shows and the powers of the audience to help construct his narrative. The *auctor* conveys a sense of the ability to inspire, God-like, to construct within the mind those things that he wishes the audience to see. Yet, by stating that “[the] unborn event/ I do commend to your content.../ Which never could I so convey/ Unless your thoughts went on my way” (4.0.45b-46, 49-50), he must ask the audience for help. The *auctor* suggests a power that Gower cannot attain, no matter how much he wishes it at the beginning of *Pericles*. It must also be noted that the same sort of *auctor*, inspired by his own God, inspired by divine will, would not need to rely on anything other than his words. To rely on the audience is to start to question the authenticity of the words that he has already spoken, words that are supposed to have been inspired by a deity.

If Gower’s words are looked at through an understanding of *auctor* as a simulation of authority, then his authority becomes more tenuous. By placing an actor as Gower on stage and professing to take authority from that figure, Shakespeare and Wilkins effectively deconstruct notions of authorship within both the medieval and renaissance traditions and produce passages in which a character professes to be the very thing that he is imitating. This, after all, is the best way, according to the early modern view, that Shakespeare or Wilkins can construct their own authority. According to tradition, the author of the present age must prove how he fits within the larger scope of literature that predates him. But as the simulation of the author becomes the representation, “[it] is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself”

(Baudrillard 1557). The sign, here the character portrayed by an actor, becomes the means of expressing authority, but, in doing so, the character instantly subverts that authority because it is built on the image pretending to be the real. If Gower's authority becomes an idealized simulation, then the power to exert that authority falls away, and the author who supposed authority must look to others in order to find it.

Reexamining Gower's first speech reveals an idealized notion of the authority of the past. If Gower's mission is "[t]o sing a song that old was sung" (1.0.1), he has already mentioned his presence within the past. That is, Gower's first words attempt to give him an authority over the play. After all, he is one of several sources from whom Shakespeare draws the inspiration for his play. As such, Gower, according to his character, should be seen as a figure that has molded the play that the audience sees. Yet, when simulation comes into play, this assertion of the authority to make and mold the play comes into question. If nostalgia is the desire for a past that is unattainable while remaining faithful to that past is nostalgic (Natali), then Shakespeare and Wilkins have constructed a character that embodies that nostalgia. The narrator attempts to reconnect with an older version of himself. He does so by assuming an identity that the audience must take as real, must accept if he is to tell the story. Gower's power of authority exists within the limits of the character's ability to acquire authority from the audience rather than from the past. Thus, the simulation depends on the audience's belief in the simulacra as the real, as real enough to convey a story of amusement that is based in medieval tradition.

Gower cannot connect to his past self. No matter how much he claims to be "[f]rom ashes ancient" (1.0.2), the audience will know that he is an actor on a stage that is

only meant to impersonate the dead author. Thus, Gower, or, more accurately, the actor that impersonates him, can be seen as an illusion, as an individual that assumes the authority of another, but only in the most rudimentary sense. He admits in the Chorus to act IV that

...[the] unborn even
 I do commend to your content.
 Only I carry winged time
 Post on the lame feet of my rhyme,
 Which never could I so convey
 Unless your thoughts went on my way (4.0.45b-50).

Thus Gower admits that all the events of the play exist at the behest of the audience. He must commend the events rather than setting them in motion himself. His ability to convey the play rests on the audience's willingness to accept what he tells them. Though Gower possesses the authority to begin and end the play, the fact that such a character can just as easily be taken from the script suggests that any necessity for Gower as a means of understanding the play and its action becomes an easily identified illusion.

The character Gower attempts to assert his authority, and in doing so, much like the aged Elizabeth, attempts to maintain an authority over his audience. He wants the audience to succumb to his will and to follow the story that he will profess, unquestioning, to simply enjoy the action on the stage, but if Gower is dead, then the authority of his revived character exists only as a nostalgic representation of the authority that might have existed when the author of *Confessio Amantis* was actually alive. But by giving Gower the ability to begin, intermediate, and end the play, the playwrights construct a character that does not have the power that he professes. What he does have is an illusion of power, a claim to an authority that exists in simulation. The audience, in

allowing him to cling to this power, blinds itself to the fact that it inhibits their own authority by forcing them to cling to the past. The Gower of the Middle Ages is a construct of nostalgia, recreated and reimagined for the stage in a way that harkens back to the medieval period but that, in doing so, only manages to assert how constructed Gower's authority actually is within and external to *Pericles*. By that, I simply mean that Gower as a character who attempts to be seen as the authority on the play can only do so with the consent of the audience, as he says in the Chorus of Act V, to name one example, beseeching the audience to listen to the watch the last act of the play "[where] what is done in action, more if might,/ Shall be discovered, please you sit and hark" (5.0.23-4). Even as the play comes to its conclusion, the narrator must ask that his audience remain for the final scenes, or the spell will be broken and the story will go unfinished. Only the presence of the audience can allow its completion. Gower can lay claim only to a portion of the authority that he seeks by assuming a part in the history that the early modern English citizen wishes to construct. He exists in the simulation.

Gower, the character of the play, exists in a moment of time, or several brief moments across a short span of time. He arrives on stage at the beginning of the play and attempts to assert his will as *auctor* of the narrative before vanishing from the minds of the audience members as the action takes place. He strives to be the authority but constantly refers back to the audience for his authority. As each Act unfolds, he reemerges, striving to reconstruct his power before vanishing again and losing what little *auctoritas* he might have gained. When he returns, he must inevitably reinsert himself into the moment of the play. By being a part of the play, Gower cannot claim the

authority of the older version of himself, Gower the author. Thus, to try to assume the role of authority ensures that Gower does just the opposite. Instead of constructing a character that the audience can see as having the mythic power of storyteller, Gower shows that he is a simulacra. He is what the early modern English citizen wants as proof of a connection to the past. The fact that such proof comes within the confined limits of a very specific time calls into question the ability to construct that connection. The more that he professes to have power, and the more that the audience attempts to give it to him, the more it becomes necessary for Gower to express his need of the audience. While the audience allows the simulation that Gower frames to proceed, he has authority, but it is an authority based illusion rather than one in which the supposed *auctor* can achieve a type of meaningful power on his own.

Though Gower's words at first suggest that he is attempting to harken back to the tradition of the Middle Ages, his words ring as a nostalgic dream, as a desire for the past that has already come and gone. Shakespeare and Wilkins's Gower attempts to maintain a faith in the past by simply being called Gower, by invoking the name of an author of the medieval period, but it is in this very construction of faith in the author, in the claims of the character to have the authority to tell the story of Pericles, that Shakespeare shows the authority of Gower as a simulation of the audience. The audience gives up its authority so that Gower may have the power of the play. Subsequently, the early modern identity built off of a past that includes Gower becomes suspect, built on nothing more than ashes.

While it may be easy to suggest that the playwrights construct the stereotypes of the 'Middle Ages' in *Pericles*, as Sprang has done, a look at the play with an eye toward

the nostalgia for the Middle Ages that Gower represents suggests that Shakespeare sought to question the notions of how power structures and authority were constructed by the people who gave power rather than those who assumed it. With an eye toward Gower as a simulation, then, the play does not so much construct stereotypes as it challenges and questions them, asking the audience to look more closely before imparting authority and weight on an age or an individual that does not quite deserve such acclaim. In the end, Gower becomes, like his authority, an illusion, a crafting of the mind and of the age that exists only while the play lasts. Though the character may attempt to seek his power from the audience, it is a power that cannot be held because of Gower's contingent nature, contingent on the belief of the audience, and a belief that is called into question even as the play ends, saying that "[in] Helicanus may you well descry/ A figure of truth, of faith, and loyalty.../ So on your patience evermore attending,/ New joy wait on you" (Epilogue 7-8, 17-18a). Gower does not say that he can show the audience a vindicated Pericles, but that such images can and must be constructed by them, just as the play can only end on the command of the audience and not until then. Gower may say the final words, but they are contingent on the audience's acceptance as much as the story is. Thus Shakespeare and Wilkins highlight the constructed nature of literary authority, specifically the kind connected to the medieval tradition, and use it to show that the audience alone holds the power to connect to the past, but does so through representation.

In many ways, this echoes current, scholarly interactions with the plays and texts of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. While there is certainly a more conscious understanding of authors as constructions of the people who read them, the prevalent

argument, especially among new historicist scholars, is to suggest that a text can only exist within its time. It can only ever mean anything with respect to the time in which it was written. Shakespeare and Wilkins seem to argue that an attempt to make connections back to the past, even to Shakespeare himself, only ever ends in a simulation of that past rather than a solid understanding of it. Thus, I can no more reach back to Shakespeare and use him as my muse than Shakespeare could Gower. The problem with this sort of black and white thinking, of considering the past as either impossible to reach or as the only place in which the text makes sense, is that it ignores the relational complexity of past and present. Shakespeare must use Gower in order to achieve his objective of freeing the present from the past.

Action: a Dumb Show and a Tilt

If Gower's authority cannot be trusted and must be seen as nostalgic for an earlier time, where might it be possible to look for an authority that can be trusted within the play, a power that is other than an illusion? For some, the answer might resolve in the dumb shows that exist in several of Gower's interactions with the audience. The dumb shows connect back to what might at first be seen as reality. The actions connect to the medieval tradition by ritualizing and giving physical manifestation to romantic strategies of the medieval tradition. While the power of the actor that plays Gower and his words may be considered illusions, an astute critic might point out that the dumb shows are also part of how the tale is constructed, and Gower even gives them a particular amount of weight when he introduces them and admits that "I nill relate, action may/ Conveniently

the rest convey, /Which might not what by me is told” (3.0.55-57). Thus, though Gower may not have the authority to construct how the audience perceives his story, his words would suggest that a greater authority exists within *Pericles*, in the form of the action. The lines previously quoted, spoken before the beginning of Act III, suggest that Gower trusts that the actions of the play cannot be misinterpreted by the viewer and so hold more weight than he would if he just spoke the story.

At first glance, Gower’s assertion that the audience can trust what it sees more than what it hears would seem like a solid argument. The audience, confronted with the illusory nature of Gower’s authority, might turn to the dumb shows which Gower the character mentions as having an authority of its own when he questions “what need speak I” (2.0.16) at the beginning of Act II moments before the performance of a dumb show. Gower’s words here would seem to suggest that the play within the play has the ability to overcome his words, or to express what he is unable to accurately convey. The dumb shows, specifically, do not rely on the tenuous nature of words and so do not appear to have the possibility for misinterpretation. In this particular moment, it is possible to see the actions without words as somehow less deceptive and, therefore, more conducive of authority than Gower.

Two problems exist with that theory. First, Gower introduces the first dumb show by admitting that “[w]hat’s dumb in show I’ll plain with speech” (3.0.14). Here Gower seems to contradict himself, and, while he cannot be trusted as an authority of the story, he also calls into question the ability of the dumb show to do so. The contradictory element of Gower’s words aside, an audience unfamiliar with the text might believe that

he is speaking here of another dumb show, but Gower is referring to the action of Act III. The problem with this is that Gower has already said that a play without words might best convey what he cannot relate with speech. Now the audience is told that they must both watch and listen in order to gain the full understanding of what is going on in the play. While it may be argued that this is the case simply because a dumb show cannot convey the necessary emotion and connections that would be required within a play, it must also be noted that Gower's words suggest that the actions alone are not quite as trustworthy as they might at first appear. The dumb show, far from being a reliable source of information for an audience and a place to look for an authority within the play, becomes another means by which *Pericles* shows authority as something that is hard to grasp, if it can be had at all. The dumb show is the perfect example of this. It oscillates between positions of authority and discredit, bringing into question the power to illustrate that it is first given.

In being both the moment of surety and the moment of uncertainty, the dumb show becomes a perfect model of the nostalgic authority of action and time within *Pericles*. By this, I mean that the actions of the dumb show exist as the means of speeding up time, of moving the story along its epic trajectory and progressing the story to another place where the actors may take over and tell the story again. But, in doing so, *Pericles* magnifies the question of how authority can be granted to something that is meant to convey the passing of years within moments. The playwrights also connect the audience to a strategy of romance, what Barbara Fuchs calls its "narrative expansiveness" (69). This move connects in many ways to the strategy of the romance to compact

extended periods of time into short interludes between the action, digressions that break up the main story.

By following this tradition, much as with the use of Gower as the storyteller, *Pericles* attempts to connect to a literary past and gain its authority through that assumption. It seeks to become part of the tradition of the medieval romance. By remaining true to the methods of storytelling that existed within the romances of earlier periods, it would appear that *Pericles* strives to maintain a sense of authority within the larger canon of the romantic genre, and, in this way, it would also appear that Sprang may be correct when he suggests that *Pericles* constructs stereotypes. Yet, these stereotypes, as I have shown both in *Pericles* and earlier in *Troilus* only serve to complicate Shakespeare's relationship to the past rather than simply glorifying it. What Sprang notices, then, is Shakespeare's need to connect to his past, but what he fails to see are the reasons for why Shakespeare makes that connection.

If the action of the dumb show suggests a connection to the medieval, romantic tradition through the desire "to fill in scenes necessary for the story but that cannot be given full dramatic representation... [turning] the play into an exceptional act of homage to medieval romance" (200). By connecting to some of the stylistic qualities that constructed the medieval romance, the use of the jousting tournament practically shouts for a connection to the apparent authority of the medieval romantic tradition. Though the specific actions of the tournament at the end of Act II Scene Two are never seen, *Pericles* clearly emerges as the victor and the eventual suitor to Thaisa following his triumph as the poor knight in the lists.

The jousting and the catalogue of knights that precedes it serves as a dual link to the past in the Second Act. First, it conveys a sense of connection to the medieval romance by developing the pomp of the tournament and suggesting that the knights are of a very particular lineage. As Cooper notes, though, the knights that are most impressively dressed do not have the royal demeanor of Pericles. Instead “Shakespeare shapes [the action] to emphasize the medieval pattern of the ‘fair unknown’, the young man who makes his mark through prowess and courtesy without any advantage of lineage, but who always turns out to be the missing prince” (201). According to Cooper, then, the joust in the play serves to further cement Shakespeare’s and Wilkins’ play within the tradition of the romance and follows the patterns of its predecessors in order to do so.

The second link connects to a moment that the Elizabethan audience would have been very familiar with, the Accession Day tilts of Queen Elizabeth. The jousting is meant to not only look to a distant medieval past, but it is also meant to show a link to the Elizabethan play where Elizabeth, as Queen, reconstructs the knightly valor of the Middle Ages in order to remind the English citizens of late Tudor England of their identity construction within the medieval tradition and, subsequently, the chivalric romance.

This second association to the medieval shows the idealized nature of the tournament in *Pericles* and calls into question the desire of Shakespeare to create a means of “homage to the power of the medieval” (Cooper 196). While the tilts may at first seem like a way for the playwright to call forward the medieval past, the fact that the tournaments also bring to mind the medieval romance and the later Elizabethan tournaments that they inspired suggests that Shakespeare did not mention the tournament

in order to call to mind the greatness of the medieval, romantic tradition, but to point out the constructed nature of those tournaments. That is, if Shakespeare and Wilkins are faithful to the joust, it is as a means of showing that the joust was and is a means of constructing identity and authority within romantic tradition. Thus the two playwrights give Gower lines that suggest that the play must show the action of Pericles' adventures in Pentapolis. Gower states that "What shall be next,/Pardon old Gower: this 'longs the text" (2.0.39b-40). The words here propose that Gower cannot impart all that is happening to the people, and so he will leave it up to the action of the play. Yet, a key element of the action goes missing in Act II Scene Two. The joust in the play only consists of the initial parade for the king and his daughter. Though it would be logistically impossible to stage a joust on the medieval stage, the fact that Gower asserts that the action will be conveyed only to have one of the key romantic elements disappear suggests that the action sustains itself on the interpretation of the audience.

By not showing the joust to the audience, by forcing them to imagine what transpires in the tournament, the playwrights effectively reconstruct the notion of the simulacra that has already been discussed in this chapter. Thus, by forcing the audience to construct what must have happened in order for Pericles to have won and not showing it to them, Shakespeare and Wilkins create a space in which the simulated nature of the joust is magnified. The Accession Day jousts, on which, as Cooper suggests, the descriptions of the knights are built, served as a reminder of the past. In so doing, they became the simulation that stood in for the real, a real that could never be returned to. Yet, because the jousts simulated the medieval tradition that the early modern period

aspired toward, the simulation became the “Thing,” as Baudrillard calls it, that it was first only meant to represent. By forcing the audience to construct the entire joust as a mental image, Shakespeare and Wilkins make the audience confront the constructed nature of those jousts and see them as simulations rather than realities. Once the joust becomes pure simulation and serves the same purpose as a joust in the lists, then the purpose of “real” jousts falls into question. If the audience can make its own connection to the medieval tradition without the simulacra present visually, then the need for the joust as a means of connecting to the past becomes tenuous.

Much like the Accession Day jousts, the tilts in *Pericles* attempt to construct a connection to the medieval by suggesting that the martial skill of the medieval tradition is still alive and well and that the knight of virtue will inevitably find his way to victory and the prize of the princess. However, because each is built on an illusion of martial combat, a stylized version of the drudgery and horror of war, any attempt to connect to the medieval joust as a means of promoting authority serves to connect to a nostalgic representation of the past. The effect runs along a similar path to the Green Knight’s accusation to Arthur and his knights that they are but beardless boys playing at war. In the same vein, the stylized combat of the jousts in early modern Britain, and the similar pattern of costuming that exists before the nonexistent joust in *Pericles*, suggest that the authors could see the simulation that existed within the lists.

What Shakespeare and Wilkins recognize and show through both their dumb shows and the tilt in Act Two is that the idealized nature of action and its accession of power, though seen as a means of creating unrivaled authority, actually manages to only

show how uncertain and simulated the medieval tradition was in its own identity. The use of both the play within a play and the joust, far from forming a connection that cannot be challenged because of the authority that it subsumes, actually manages to show Shakespeare's understanding of the nostalgic identity construction that existed both within literature and external to it at the time. As he shows in his use of these two romantic motifs, their existence within the play does not provide the play with any more authority or means of preserving the medieval identity as much as it proves that the medieval identity is a construction created by the early modern reader or audience member.

Conclusion

Though much of the current scholarship that surrounds *Pericles* has focused on how well it returns to the medieval tradition and sings the praises of the medieval world, I would suggest that *Pericles* does just the opposite. In this analysis, I have shown that Shakespeare and Wilkins were not so much interested in developing a connection with the past but in showing their audience the constructed nature of the authority of the medieval, romantic tradition and, subsequently, its early modern equivalent.

By using devices that existed within the medieval tradition in order to tell their story, Shakespeare and Wilkins wrote a play that seemed to conform to the idealized notions of medieval romanticism. Yet, analyzed more closely, attempts at recreating the medieval authority did not so much help to bolster a belief in the medieval as they questioned its effectiveness. While Gower can be seen as a narrator from whom

Shakespeare and Wilkins took their authority in order to tell a story that he had written, it must also be noted that Gower continually refers to the ability of the audience to construct his tale. There are moments where the Chorus suggests that Gower can affect how the play is viewed, as with the very beginning and very end of the play, but I have shown that, more often, Gower must ask the audience for help in creating his story.

Though the use of Gower creates a connection to the notion of *auctoritas*, the same character's constant use of terms such as "for you" suggests that he is more indebted to the audience than they are to him. Thus, while *auctoritas* may seem to exist within this play, it serves a paradoxical purpose and forces the audience to see constructions of literary authority, specifically what comes out of the medieval tradition through Gower, as a simulation. The audience constructs authority. The audience gives power to the author.

At the same time, the dumb shows and the joust in the play serve a similar role. They take away the ability for actions that simulate supposed medieval traditions to connect back to their constructed medieval roots. That is, while it may appear that jousts and dumb shows can convey a truer story than a Gower, who is nothing more than a character, in fact, the dumb shows in *Pericles* and the joust that accompanies them serve as a reminder that ritualized actions like jousts only hold their own authority as simulations as well. The joust in the play is a construct of the mind, and yet it is through this construction that the audience connects to the medieval tradition rather than through any authority of the action itself. They exist as part of history because the audience allows it, not because they are a part of history. The dumb shows and jousts are

simulations taken as real because they are seen as just as much an illusion as Gower the character is.

Shakespeare and Wilkins, then, seem to have created a play in order to challenge notions of authority and place the audience at the head of the exchange. The audience remains the one constant factor in this exchange. It is the audience that gives Gower his ability to tell the story, the audience who allows the actions of the dumb show and the joust to carry weight and significance that they might not otherwise hold. In so doing, the two playwrights constructed a play that challenges the notions of what it means to be real and suggest that reality exists within the moment. The danger comes when constructions of reality based on the past, simulations, become confused with the present. At that point, the audience gives up its power and becomes chained to a past of ghosts and simulacra.

As they make their assertions, though, Shakespeare and Wilkins become a part of the past that they attempt to subvert. In essence, as the modern reader encounters the text, Shakespeare and Wilkins take the place of Gower and become the simulated author. In the same vein, they serve as the model for the modern reader who may be trying to look back to the past. While they may present an argument for presentism, for texts only meaning something within their present moment, Wilkins and Shakespeare also reach back to the past in order to set themselves and their audience apart from the middle ages, just as modern readers who come to *Pericles* will inevitably do so in relation to the early modern period.

SEPARATING AGES IN THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

Introduction

I have already looked at how Shakespeare used one adaptation of Chaucer to challenge constructions of identity within romance for early modern England through *Troilus and Cressida*. But Shakespeare returned to his source in Chaucer later in life with John Fletcher in order to reacquaint himself with the notions of how England perceived itself at the time and how he could challenge those notions. In one of his final works, Shakespeare returned to Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* and provided another, and I will argue more complete, means of deconstructing the ideals of early modern England by looking to a source that was steeped in the medieval period.

In her essay entitled "Shakespeare's Ages," Ruth Morse argues that, though a modern reader may see the text of a play like *Two Noble Kinsmen* (TNK) as a connection to the past, as a means of calling forward the themes of the medieval period, he would not have recognized his work as doing that. She states that "Shakespeare may have written about events which we think happened in the Middle Ages, but *he* cannot so have conceptualized them" (254 emphasis original). Conceptually, then, according to Morse, it would seem that the medieval period, as the modern critic views it, creates a divide between the medieval and the early modern and, to theorize Shakespeare's interaction with the former as entirely separate from the latter is to map modern interpretations of time onto individuals, in this case Shakespeare, who would not have shared the same idea of time.

This chapter challenges Morse's idea and shows *TNK*, as a play that both conceptualizes and deconstructs the nostalgia of the medieval period, points to a realization that Shakespeare did, in fact, see his own Elizabethan/Jacobean England as unique to the particular time in which he wrote his plays. Specifically, I will show how Shakespeare and Fletcher construct a play that disconnects from the past and sets itself up as distinct. Elizabethan England, according to the play written by Shakespeare and Fletcher, was distinct from the medieval past. I will show, then, that Shakespeare and Fletcher's *TNK* exhibits an awareness of temporality that at first glance appears to move fluidly from one era to the next but is, upon further examination, more discrete than Morse argues. In presenting its three main characters as idealized manifestations of the three keys of chivalric romance (love, war, and chastity), *TNK* first deconstructs the identity formations of early modern England with regards to the romantic nostalgia that was used to insulate the country against its growing identity crisis. *TNK*, then, furthers the challenges to identity formation that are dissected in both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Pericles*. Whereas *Troilus* shows that the medieval identity was always a construction even to itself and *Pericles* elaborates on the simulated nature of authority, *TNK* looks at how the ideals of the past interact with one another and the present. In this play, Shakespeare and Fletcher seem to have been more thorough in their deconstruction. That is, the play seems to develop the romantic, ideological, and cultural relations that are said to exist within the narrative structure of romance and, subsequently, in early modern England. By looking at how these relationships interact, Shakespeare is able to challenge the relational constructions that he sees in his own time and develop a sense of early

modern England as a distinct and classifiable age, in a similar vein to the argument that pervades both *Troilus* and *Pericles*.

In order to illustrate this argument, I will look at three different relationships that exist within the play and examine how Shakespeare's portrayal of each effectively illustrates the illusiveness and constructed nature of the relations.

I observe the construction of relationships that exist within the love and friendship stories of the tale. That is, I will show that male-male, female-female, and male-female relationships, when seen in the light of nostalgia, represent a division between Classical and early modern ideals of relationships that the play highlights in order to better question how all such relations can exist simultaneously and without destroying one another. Shakespeare and Fletcher, in presenting their Palamon-Arcite, Emilia-Flavina, and Palamon-Emilia-Arcite love interests, establish a stage on which these simultaneous friendships come into contact with one another and react to each other in a way that they do not in most Romance.

I also look at how the archetypes of the Virgin, the Lover, and the Knight interact in the play. That is, I will examine how chastity, love, and war mingle similarly to the several love stories of *TNK* and force reactions among them that challenge how the three can coexist within the structure of stories such as romances or, more importantly, within the societal and political structures of early modern England.

Each of these builds towards my final argument, in which I will propose that, far from exhibiting the kind of fluid understanding of history that Morse suggests for Shakespeare, *TNK* exhibits a modern understanding of temporality. While it might have

been popular to conceive of Britain as the new Troy, Shakespeare constructs a play which wonders at the place of Britain in an ever changing and evolving world. Rather than accepting the easy answer of reaching toward a Medieval or Classical past that might offer the illusion of security and sustainability, Shakespeare seems to challenge that notion, as has been seen earlier, but in *TNK*, one of his last plays, the playwright takes the notion further than he has in his other plays and points out the cavernous divides that separate the ideologies of the past from the present. While it may be easier to suggest a Shakespeare whose understanding of the past is different from our own, *TNK* does not support such a claim and, in fact, destabilizes the notion of past, raising the question of where it is that the identity is meant to come from.

The Love Interests

TNK establishes its identity as a second examination of a theme that Shakespeare investigated earlier in his career. Much as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which the main characters, Valentine and Proteus, must eventually choose between their own friendship and a woman, *TNK* conveys a scene in which two apparently loyal friends must choose between the love that they bear for one another and the love that they hold for a beautiful woman. The dichotomy between the two types of love highlights how they react to and shape one another throughout the play and how their interaction eventually ends. Interestingly, the differences between how *TGV* and *TNK* deal with this relationship dichotomy are striking, though the two seem to travel on similar trajectories until the final act. The other relationship of the play comes with the introduction of a female

companion for the beautiful maiden in childhood and complicates a one to one comparison of the love interests in *TGV* and *TNK*. Each expression of love possesses different qualities, and I would argue that each also challenges the notion that all can exist simultaneously. The relationships presented in *TNK* exist according to a connection to a medieval and Classical literary tradition and serve to point out how the two contradict one another.

Shakespeare's interest in how a world that valued male-male over male-female relationships could exist manifested itself early, as I have noted, in *TGV*. As William C. Carroll notes in his introduction to the earlier play, the development of the conflict between the homosocial and the romantic relationships eventually leads to the suggestion "that romantic desire is a vastly stronger power than male-male friendship" (34), at least as the action of the play goes. This development of the strength of the romantic relation as possibly superior to the homosocial illustrates the "changing conceptions of marriage in the early modern period, in which romantic companionate relations are elevated as equal or superior to purely arranged marriages based on economic considerations" (15). The empowered view of the romantic relationship also comes as a response to the idealization of the homosocial relationship which "performs a project of cultural nostalgia, a stepping back from potentially more threatening social arrangements to a world of order" (15). While Carroll's argument focuses on *TGV*, the same argument should be used to better understand how *TNK* dissects relationships. Both *TGV* and *TNK* show that there has been a shift from the ideals of the Classical period, and even the early

medieval period, to the early modern period, a shift that I will return to later in this chapter.

Though Carroll's analysis centers on *TGV*, as he points out, Shakespeare deals with many of the same issues in *TNK*. By presenting a play in which the homosocial and the romantic relationships must interact at odds with one another, as they often do in romance, Shakespeare can challenge the notion of idealizing the male-male over the male-female and point out that, by idealizing one over the other, an inevitable conflict must emerge that ends in disturbing consequences in both plays. In *TNK*, the audience is confronted with the death of Arcite, and the Epilogue hints at the expected response when it asks if

[n]o man smile[s]?
 Then it goes hard, I see. He that has
 Loved a young handsome wench, then, show his face—
 'Tis strange if none be here—and if he will
 Against his conscience, let him hiss, and kill
 Our market. 'Tis in vain, I see, to stay ye.
 Have at the worst can come, then! (Epilogue 4b-10a).

While not the final words of *TNK*, they echo a loss of merriment and a lack of hope while also conveying a violent reaction to what the play has shown. Here the play suggests that while the people may not be happy with what has transpired in the play, it has already come to pass and exists as a part of the romantic story constructed by Shakespeare and Fletcher. The prospect of a wedding becomes marred by an accidental death. At the end of the play, the audience is left with the realization that Palamon has lost a friend that he supposedly cherished for the chance to be with Emilia. But this is the way of romance,

though it is not always quite as bleak. The knight who wins the lady must eventually choose her or the friends that he cherishes.

Just as Lancelot chooses Guinevere over the Round Table, and inadvertently begins the destructive end of Camelot, so too, the fact that Arcite and Palamon fall in love with Emilia inevitably leads to a confrontation that can have only one, tragic end. As Lancelot falls for Guinevere, he must choose whether or not to act on his love. Once he does, and once it is spoken of, Arthur has no choice but to confront him. When Lancelot flees England, Arthur follows him, and Mordred, his son, is able to use the opening to attempt to take control of England. Prior to his fall, though, Lancelot finds himself caught between two worlds, the world of his romantic relationship and the one of his homosocial duties. The choice of one leads to the inevitable death of the other. Lancelot chooses Guinevere and so dooms Camelot, an idyll for the perfect knights.

In the same vein, Act II Scene Two of *TNK* first constructs the ideal male-male relationship as Arcite notes that “[w]hilst Palamon is with me, let me perish/ If I think this a prison” (2.2.61-62). Thus the two of them create their own version of Camelot in which the sufferings of prison fall away at the joy of each other’s company. Little more than fifty lines on, though, this ideal construction vanishes as first Palamon and then Arcite falls in love with Emilia. Much as with Camelot, the choice becomes one of the romantic versus the homosocial, and the choice of the romantic relationship means that the homosocial one can no longer exist.

Shakespeare had already dealt with a similar conundrum in *TGV*, but in *TNK*, with Fletcher, he raises the stakes. The fact that Shakespeare and Fletcher decide to kill

one of the kinsmen in this play, as opposed to having either of the knights offer the young woman as a possession to his friend, also suggests a shift in the ideology of the playwright. Far from reacting to the situation the way that Valentine does, neither Arcite nor Palamon is willing to give up his love for Emilia. Instead, they must fight to the death, for that is the price that the loser must pay according to Theseus. The difference between the tradition of Camelot and *TNK* comes from the fact that neither Arcite nor Palamon holds sway over his fate. Theseus controls the facts of life and death rather than allowing the two fighters to settle their own argument. In the case of Lancelot and Arthur, the two engage in a conflict that ends with the destruction of Camelot. Arcite and Palamon joust in order to win Emilia and avoid death, but it is a death imposed by Theseus rather than one organically constructed by the outcome of their confrontation. Though there is a possibility of reconciliation early on, Shakespeare offers “a different vision of the world, in which human love and ideals come in painful conflict with a mutability that stubbornly resists providential hope, and Shakespeare took that conflict still further into skepticism, even cynicism” (Cooper 234). Cooper’s assessment of *TNK* develops what I would argue is the nostalgic imperative of the play’s primary relationship dichotomy. That is, Shakespeare forces his audience to confront the idealization of the homosocial relation head on and forces it through a nostalgic prism in which the final outcome of a world devoted to a Classical ideal ends in the death of an otherwise strong friendship. The Classical and the early modern fail to coexist on the stage, and Shakespeare and Fletcher point out the impossibility of reacquiring the ancient Greek ideologies in a world that values the romantic relationship more.

Shakespeare does not conclude his relational dichotomies with the single binary that exists between the homosocial and the romantic (more specifically between the male-male and the male-female relations). While this may have been enough in his earlier play, his new foray into the same constructs develops further into an examination of the female-female homosocial relations in interaction with both the male-male and the male-female relationships.

In Act I Scene Three, Emilia admits the love that she once had for a girlhood friend, Flavina, who died when they were still children. Flavina's absence does not seem to have dampened Emilia's memory of the other girl as she describes the love as a relationship in which "what she liked/ Was then of me approved, what not, condemned" (1.3.64b-65). The audience would have been reminded of a similar love between Valentine and Proteus, a love that was meant to make the two as one, and, therefore, a love that has echoes in the love that Arcite and Palamon apparently share.

Shakespeare's construction of a separate homosocial relationship in *TNK* effectively deconstructs the other because it is its mirror image. What may be seen as an idealized relationship between two men may also be seen that way between two girls. And yet, Shakespeare does not let Flavina exist on the stage. She is an echo, a memory. Emilia looks back on her past with her friend and constructs a reality in which the two of them were happy. Emilia effectively attempts to return to this place in her final prayer at Diana's shrine when she asks to either be given to the one knight that truly loves her or to become a priestess of Diana, effectively denouncing men. This relationship can and should be seen as another nostalgic ideal, as another attempt at returning to a more

orderly past. But, as with Arcite and Palamon, Emilia's past, once dissolved, cannot be returned to. Any attempts to do so emerge as shards of memory, as remembrances of the past that can only be imagined, never attained. As Emilia remembers her relationship with Flavina, she tries to reconstruct a more secure past, but this past is a simulation, an unattainable return. Instead of moving into the past, she must move forward into a future with the winner of the tournament as wife and husband.

TNK's development of the multiple relationships within the play shows a more cynical Shakespeare, as Cooper suggests, but it is also a Shakespeare who is more aware of the nostalgic idealizations that exist within the identity constructions of the romances that he sees. While he is able to deal with the relationship in part in *TGV* by producing a shocking resolution in which one friend offers his apparent love interest to her attempted rapist, Shakespeare approaches and challenges the same subject more effectively at the end of his career. In *TNK*, rather than giving his characters an escape from the tragedy that has been produced on stage and making the audience uncomfortable with the resolution, Shakespeare does not allow for that resolution. Arcite must go the way of Flavina and enter the grave if Palamon and Emilia are to have their happily ever after. The playwright does not idealize the Classical notion of the homosocial relationship; nor does he allow it the power that it achieves at the end of *TGV*. Both Emilia and Palamon, nostalgic as they are for the past, must give up those illusions and move into the future of marriage.

Mars, Diana, and Venus

Perhaps the most important scene in *TNK* comes in Act V Scene One, where each of the three characters in the fated love triangle goes before a shrine to pray to a particular god and ask for the favor of that particular god. Arcite begs the god of War to give him victory in battle. Palamon beseeches the goddess of Love to give him Emilia, and Emilia asks that she be given to either the knight who truly loves her most or be allowed to continue on her path as a virgin for the rest of her life. As I shall show, each receives his or her request. I will return to this idea later, but first I will explore how each prayer expresses a nostalgic ideal of the past and how that construction shows the chaotic relationship among the three divinely inspired attributes.

Emilia is the character who appears to get one answer from the goddess before the sign changes, and she must accept that either Palamon or Arcite will be her husband. Emilia is not destined for a life at the convent. Thus, Emilia goes before the shrine of Diana and asks that the goddess that

He of the two pretenders that best loves me
And has the truest title in't, let him
Take off my wheaten garland, or lese grant
The file and quality I hold I may
Continue in thy band (5.1.158-62).

The prayer is not, in and of itself, remarkable. Emilia follows the pattern of every love interest before her that has been faced with the decision of two lovers who will battle for her hand. Mallory's Guinevere serves as the perfect medieval example. The Queen of Camelot loves Arthur, but she also desires Lancelot, and so the two must battle for her love. Interestingly, in Mallory, in single combat, Lancelot comes out the victor, though he

is eventually forced to give up Guinevere and flee. Still, *TNK* illuminates the same moral dilemma for Emilia that Guinevere faces before her. She must choose a knight to bestow her love upon. Emilia responds with a prayer that the one who loves her the most will be the victor. In some cases, the lady has her favorite, and he is always the victor, but Emilia's case is not unique to her. Several earlier tales, such as *The Knight with the Lion* as written by Chretien de Troyes, involve knights of equal strength and skill who often battle over a precious object before one is eventually defeated and killed. In the story, Yvain, following the advice of his cousin Calogrenant, departs on a journey that eventually leads to a confrontation with a vicious knight over a young maiden. Yvain succeeds where his cousin had failed to defeat the knight, and he and the Lady Lunette marry, though there are several trials in the intermediary. Emilia's relationship with Arcite and Palamon follows a similar trajectory, but it is different in the fact that she does not choose a side, asking for the protection of her goddess and hoping that the knight who wins will love her. It also breaks from tradition in the fact that Emilia seeks to replace a romantic relationship with a homosocial one. She uses the same ideology that the men do, and this same ideology serves to point out how the homosocial does not work in a world based on romantic relationships.

Though Emilia's character falls within a particular pattern, Shakespeare creates a unique interaction for her in that he demands the end of her virginity through the divine. Emilia, at the end of the play, hates that either Arcite or Palamon must die because both love her and seems to wish that she might be left to live a chaste life rather than letting either die. Yet, as with romances, one knight must die so that the other can attain the

virginal lady and so consummate the relationship. In most romances, the knight who wins, as I have said, is favored by the lady, and so the audience is allowed to feel a sense of relief that she can be with the man that loves her. In Chretien's *Perceval*, the eponymous knight battles the vicious Clamadeu "who'd never in his life been defeated" (Troyes 83). But all of Clamadeu's invincibility does not serve him against the righteousness and love of *Perceval*. Shakespeare does not allow for such a simple resolution, though.

Emilia never gives up her desire for her independence, but her prayer also comes into conflict with that of Arcite and Palamon. Emilia's prayer, then, is nostalgic. She looks into the past, offers faith to her chosen goddess and desires to be rewarded, but as the play comes to a close, she clearly realizes that the past that she asks for cannot become a reality. It cannot exist because it directly conflicts with the other ideals of the romance, those of the soldier and the lover. The nostalgia springs from the impossibility of the prayer to be answered. With Emilia's faith, and the subsequent denial of her ability to return to the past, she has inarguably fallen into a romantic nostalgia. As Shakespeare makes apparent, both in *TGV* and *TNK*, the final victories will inevitably go to the male figure in the romance. What the playwrights show, then, is the impossibility of Emilia's desire. Because it falls within the ideal, because she wishes to be the virgin of nostalgia, she cannot continue on her path. Instead, she must do as the women of romance have done before her and become the trophy of a knight who supposedly loves her.

Shakespeare and Fletcher paint a disturbing image, one in which the girl who is nostalgic does not get her desire to be left alone and live her life in the entourage of

Diana. But Emilia's case is not all together unique in *TNK*. Both Arcite and Palamon engage in the same ritualistic prayer with the hopes of attaining their desired end goal, and so it is necessary to examine their prayers together and subsequently look at how the end of the play deals with the contradictory nature of the kinsmen. For Arcite, who begs Mars to "instruct [me] this day/ With military skill, that to thy laud/ I may advance my streamer, and by thee/ Be styled the lord o'th' day" (5.1.57b-60a). Arcite desires to win the tournament more than he hopes to win the love of Emilia and marry her. Here he follows much of the tradition of chivalric romance. While "romance stages over and over the tension between the pursuit of love and the pursuit of arms, presenting the lover as essentially compromised by the erotic drive that takes him away from his obligations" (Fuchs 47), in Arcite Shakespeare constructs a character whose sole desire is for the martial aspects of the knight, who does not care nearly as much for the love of the lady. He is the knight who leaves her in the tower to go on another adventure.

Palamon follows a different course entirely, going to Venus and declaring "[h]ail, sovereign queen of secrets...that hast the might/ Even with an eye-glance to choke Mars's drum" (5.1.77a, 79b-80). The beginning of Palamon's prayer suggests that he believes that love can usurp the power of war. His words reflect "the enhanced role of eros in the culture, and the way that love takes over, however uncomfortably, the [discourse] of war" (Fuchs 46). Palamon's prayer exhibits the qualities of the lover who has left his companions in search of love, who has given up the lance in favor of the rose, and, yet, his words also seem to reflect a belief that Love can give him victory in the lists. His language echoes that of a combatant, but a warrior of Venus instead of Mars.

Most readers would expect, then, that Palamon, the more romantically inclined of the two, would attain victory in the tournament between the two. The common romantic motif suggests that the lover must essentially be the most perfect knight, that he who loves the woman most will find within himself the ability to overcome the obstacles that knights similar to Arcite represent. However, as the final few scenes of the play show, Arcite wins their confrontation. He is given the day as he begs of Mars, and it is only a tragic accident on a horse before his wedding that denies him a marriage to Emilia and rescues Palamon from certain death.

Several problems exist in these instances and point to the two playwrights' abilities to magnify the cracks in the romanticized ideology of the time. First, Arcite is the victor in the lists, which he asks for, but which also goes against the tradition of the romance, suggesting that the relationship between love and war, seen in most romances as necessarily intertwined, cannot exist together. Arcite is not the true love, as Yvain, Lancelot, or Perceval is; yet he emerges from the tournament as the victor. In other words, Arcite's victory in the lists, and his subsequent death for Palamon to gain the hand of Emilia, suggest that the two can attain their victories, but these victories are hollow. While Arcite gains his glory, it is short-lived. Second, Arcite's death presents a chasm in the relationship ideologies of the play, much like the death of Flavina that is mentioned earlier in the play. In order for the conquered to triumph in his supplication to the goddess of Love, the victor must, inevitably, die. Each man gets exactly what he asks for, but by acquiring his specific victory, the gaps between love and war, gaps that go unnoticed in the nostalgia for the medieval age, become even more apparent than they

were before. The acknowledgment of these gaps ultimately leads to the deconstruction of the unities between the two that are often taken for granted.

Thus, the Virgin can no longer be a Virgin. The Lover, in acquiring his love, cannot be the warrior, and the warrior who has apparently gained acclaim on the battlefield must seek his solace in Elysium. *TNK* does more than simply challenge the connections between love, war, and chastity, as Fuchs suggests romance often does through its patterns. When seen as a response to the nostalgic ideal of romance in the early modern Period, *TNK* points out the constructed nature of the belief that the three can coexist. By showing the tragic denial of victory, or the ultimate price for achieving it, Shakespeare neglects to allow an easy conclusion to the romantic theme that he constructs in *TNK*. Instead, the characters are left as shadows, incomplete representations of what they were meant to signify because, though they were each faithful to their own individual god or goddess, the possibility of being faithful to all remained beyond possibility and must, therefore, be nostalgic. This device follows a similar pattern to Emilia's desire for Flavina, or, rather, her remembrance of the childhood friend. Flavina, dead, exists in memory, and that memory consists of a strong desire to return to the past. In many ways, each prayer attempts a return to the past because it connects to the Classical gods, but, though each prayer gets an answer, the end of the play suggests that the prayers, like the memory of Flavina, exist as a desperate attempt to reconnect with a history that is beyond reach.

Classical, Medieval, Early Modern

The majority of this conversation has been centered on two concepts of relationships and how *TNK* challenges the ability of each to exist. To this point, I have dealt with topics that touch on but are not directly related to Ruth Morse's claim that Shakespeare existed in a time that would have seen the past as fluid. I have had to first build examples of how two other apparently fluid relationships existed in contradiction to one another, at least according to the text of *TNK*. Now I will shift my attention to her overall argument and suggest that, following in the footsteps of their other relations, Shakespeare and Fletcher also manage to construct, within the lines of *TNK*, a challenge to Morse's assertion that Shakespeare and his contemporaries considered past and present as fluid and continuous. Specifically, by looking at examples from both the dichotomies of romance and homosocial relations and the tripartite dichotomy that exists among love, war, and chastity, I will show that *TNK* illustrates a divided past, one with clearly marked and distinguishable ideologies. By pointing out how such ideologies are idealized in early modern England and how a look at those ideals in the play breaks down the possibility of the fluid construction of time, I argue that though Shakespeare may have lived in a world that desired the ideals of multiple ages, his and Fletcher's play reflects an understanding that the present exists quite divided from the past.

If *TNK* is a combination of the multiple voices of Shakespeare's age, then it is one that shows that "England has a fundamentally split identity, with barbarous origins repeatedly popping up to question the success of its own [tradition]" (Bernau 116). That is, if *TNK* were constructed by an author who saw the past and the present as a

continuous whole, then the play would respond differently to the ideals that it constructs. As we have seen, however, though several ideals come into contact with one another, they do so in often violent ways.

In the first section of this chapter, I looked at how *TNK* deconstructs the negotiations between homosocial relationship and their romantic counterparts. As I noted in that section, Carroll suggests that the return to the idealization of the homosocial reflected a nostalgic desire for order. That order, at least so far as it is defined in the usurpation of the romantic love by the homosocial, comes from a Classical understanding of how relationships worked and the fact that male-male relationships were seen as more desirable than were relationships between men and women that existed, according to the ancient Greeks, as a means of procreation only. I would build on that concept now and suggest that it also clarifies the split identity of early modern English society and suggests that, while the people may attempt to become a part of either a Classical, or medieval, age by continuing, or reconstructing, the belief in the superiority of homosocial relations, *TNK* challenges that and shows the split ages emerging in English society.

By presenting a world occupied by the ideal male friendship alongside its counterpart in a female homosocial relationship, Shakespeare and Fletcher bring these friendships into contact in a way that disavows the ability for each to exist in relation to the others. At the same time, they question the ability for any homosocial relationships to exist in a world in which romantic love is also said to exist. While it may be argued that they can exist in comparison to one another, at least in *TNK* they are unable to do so. The death of Arcite at the end of the play denies the ability for the kind of structural

relationship that builds on its opposite. Instead, one relationship must inevitably destroy another and the ultimate end comes with the realization that Arcite and Palamon must choose either each other or Emilia. The fact that they each choose Emilia, though for different reasons, results in the eventual death of one of the friends. Thus, while it may be said that Shakespeare lived in a world in which the ages were more fluid, in the case of *TNK*, at least, the characters, their actions, and the tragic conclusion of the play suggest that the ideals of the Classical period, while desired, cannot exist in a world in which the ideas about marriage are shifting away from marriage for profit to marriage for love (Carroll).

At the same time that *TNK* is struggling against the notion that the Classical and the early modern can mingle in a mesh of ideals, it also challenges the concept of the medieval as integrated into the early modern. Rather than allowing the winner of the tilt to be the one who truly loves Emilia, he follows his source and gives the victory to Arcite, who has prayed for glory from Mars. Palamon, the true love, must rely on a tragic accident to his friend in order to attain his own desire and not lose his head. The difference between Shakespeare and his source exists in how each handles this accident. While Chaucer at least grants that the gods had some part to play in the death of Arcite, Shakespeare, on the other hand, does not make it quite so clean and only gives a passing reference to Saturn before concluding the play with an Epilogue that suggests Arcite's death was little more than part of a twisted, market economy (Cooper). That is, Arcite's death pays the price for his victory in the lists and allows Palamon to achieve his own goals. The gratification of one goal comes with the denial of another. As with Camelot,

the taking of one love denies another. Emilia's virginity, seen as the prize, or the price must be paid for with the death of the homosocial friendship. Shakespeare and Fletcher may not change their source entirely, but there is a clear disconnect between the classical world that Chaucer looks to and the one that Shakespeare reflects on in *TNK*. With the disinterested gods, the gods barely mentioned at all for the trio that make their supplications, Shakespeare and Fletcher deny a connection to the past. The gods, though evoked, have no real power on the stage. Theseus's words begin to ring like the people in search of an identity, looking to something beyond what is in the present in order to understand the trauma of the immediate moment. Instead of allowing Palamon to be the victor and the three to live happily ever after in a romantic tradition in which Arcite would have found his own proper love, Shakespeare follows a tradition in which one of the characters must die, and he takes it further by severing it from the Classical age, denying the comfort of fate to his audience, in spite of, or perhaps magnified by, Theseus's claims that "[n]ever Fortune did play a subtler game" (5.4.112b-3a). Theseus's final speech echoes Chaucer's own in *The Knight's Tale*, but, as Helen Cooper shows, Chaucer used his play to ask questions of religion in his own time. The playwrights, in repeating the scene, deconstruct the possibility of religious intervention and the medieval certainty in Christianity.

Shakespeare and Fletcher also enable a sharp critique of an identity formation that is built upon the idealization of both love and war of Medieval England. In other words, *TNK* shows the relationship among "discordant national voices that are never entirely stilled" (Hirst 257). The play disavows the ability for the chaste, the sexual, and the

violent to exist simultaneously and, in so doing, derails the ability for the early modern audience to construct its identity in relation to these various voices by exposing them as part of a nostalgic past. By looking at how *TNK* brings the Classical, Medieval, and early modern together on one stage, and by paying attention to how it dissolves the boundaries between them in order to force a confrontation, Shakespeare and Fletcher do not construct a world of ages, but a world clearly set apart as a singular moment rather than a fluid group of ages. In *TNK*, the Classical, Medieval, and early modern do not work together, and so I think it unwise to suggest that Shakespeare saw himself as part of some continuous age that bled from eon to eon with only marginal shifts in identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Though the idea of saying Shakespeare was a man of many ages is attractive, such an idea naturally falls flat. The idea of Shakespeare's multiple ages presents an interpretation that is markedly different from the modern reader's idea of time, but I have shown a playwright who was conscious of the fact that he lived in a world separate from its predecessors both in time and in ideology. By seeing *TNK* as the culmination of Shakespeare's challenge to the multiplicity of identities present in the early modern period, it becomes evident that, at least with Fletcher, Shakespeare pondered the possibility that the past and the present were mutually exclusive.

TNK, when seen as nostalgic, breaks down the multiplicity of identities that construct early modern identity. Shakespeare conveys in his play a sense of chaotic identity with voices working against one another in a destructive and counterproductive war of self-annihilation that inevitably leads to the destruction of all of these identities. *TNK* does fall into the category of tragic romance, and as such it inherently challenges the preconceived assumptions of the age, but I argue that Shakespeare and Fletcher challenge the assumptions that their own people have created about their ideologies, and their play flows from a need to deconstruct the very foundations of those beliefs. *TNK* does not challenge the beliefs of the period as much as it shows them as nostalgic representations of cultures past whose ideologies cannot exist in the modern world of England, thus rendering them irrelevant.

The fact that the interactions of the characters in the play bring up issues of religion, friendship, and virtue, all keys to understanding the early modern psyche,

suggests that Shakespeare was, in fact, aware of the voices that warred in his world. He saw them, not as constructive of a powerful means of constructing English identity, nor as a way for the English to insulate themselves against the invasive and destructive outside forces that were seen as constant threats to being English. Rather, through *TNK*, Shakespeare suggests the outcome of the multifaceted mentality is utter destruction. The question that arises from this reading, though, is what the alternative would be. For Shakespeare, the answer seems to be a renunciation of identities based on the past, based on nostalgia and illusion, and focusing on what makes the modern England of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries unique.

Similar to the concepts within *Troilus* and *Pericles*, the notion of separated time periods suggests that Shakespeare and the playwrights with whom he wrote saw their world as divided from its predecessors. They were the presentists of their age, seeking to show the early modern world that the only importance a text really had was within its own time period. Yet, as they attempted to disconnect themselves from the past, Shakespeare and his contemporaries found themselves needing to look back at it. While they may have wanted a nice, clean schism to separate themselves from the past, they had to compare themselves to it. Though Shakespeare appears to desire a separation between his own time and that of his predecessors, such a thing becomes impossible. The present and the past are not simple binaries that can be seen as entirely dissimilar. Rather, they must be seen in a relationship with one another. Just as it is not possible to develop a “pure” sense of the past, as in new historicism, so too it is not possible to suggest that the present exists as a solitary entity. Instead, they must be seen working together to define

one another. The lesson becomes one for the modern world in which the pendulum of scholarly debate continues to shift back and forth between presentism and new historicism. Rather than living within the contradictory binaries that each branch creates, current scholarship should learn the impossibility of creating such dichotomies from Shakespeare and see that the present and the past can and should work toward a common goal. The modern world is defined by not only what makes it unique, but also how it compares itself to the worlds that came before. Developing a sense of this world in relation to those that came before it will allow scholarship to understand its current place more thoroughly.

REFERENCES CITED

- Baudrillard, Jean. "from The precession of Simulacra." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B Leitch. New York: W W Norton and Company, 2010. 1553-66. Print.
- Bernau, Anke. "Myths of Origin and the Struggle Over Nationhood in Medieval and Early modern England." McMullan, Gordon and David Matthews. *Reading the Medieval in Early modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 106-119. Print.
- Chrostowska, S. D. "Consumed by Nostalgia?" *SubStance* 39.2 (2010): 52-70. Web. 23 Jan 2015.
- Cooper, Helen. *The Arden Shakespeare Critical Companions: Shakespeare and the Medieval World*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010. Print.
- Fuchs, Barbara. *Romance: the New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Hirst, Derek. "Text, Time, and the Pursuit of 'British Identities'." Baker, David J. and Willy Maley. *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*. -. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 256-66. Print.
- Kaplan, Michael. "Missing Misrecognition." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 53.3 (2012): 265-285. Web. 23 Jan 2015. <<http://tandfonline.com/loi/rctc20>>.
- Mallin, Eric S. "Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: Troilus and Cressida." *Representations* 29 (1990): 145-179. Print.
- . *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Print.
- Morse, Ruth. "Shakespeare's Ages." *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production*. Ed. Peter Holland. Vol. 59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 254-266. Print.
- Munro, Lucy. "Shakespeare and the uses of the Past: Critical Approaches and Current Debates." *Shakespeare* 7.1 (2011): 102-125. Web. 23 Jan 2015. <<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rshk20>>.
- Natali, Marcos. "History and the Politics of Nostalgia." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* (2009). Web. <<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ijcs/nostalgia/nostfe1.htm>>.
- Ortego, James. "Seeking the Medieval in Shakespeare: The Order of the Garter and the Topos of Derisive Chivalry." *Fifteenth-century Studies* 35 (2010): 80-104. Print.
- Perry, Curtis. "The Citizen Politics of Nostalgia: Queen Elizabeth in Early Jacobean London." *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23.1 (1993): 89-111. Print.

- Shakespeare, William and George Wilkins. *Pericles*. Ed. Suzanne Gossett. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2004. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Ed. William C. Carroll. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004. Print.
- . *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Ed. Eugene M. Waith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- . *Troilus and Cressida*. Ed. David Bevington. London: Arden, 1998. Print.
- Sprang, Felix C. H. "'Never Fortune Did Play a Subtler Game': The Creation of 'Medieval' Narratives in *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*." *European Journal of English Studies* 15.2 (2011): 115-128. Print.