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SHAKESPEARE'S CHANGE FROM TRAGEDY TO DRAMATIC ROMANCE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long noted a difference in the type of play represented in the various periods of Shakespeare's career. Three types were commonly recognized as the chief on the Elizabethan stage: comedy, tragedy, and history. Later a somewhat distinctive type, called tragicomedy, became familiar. Shakespeare's first editors classified all his plays under the three forms above indicated; modern critics find it convenient to distinguish some as "tragicomedies," or (a term of more recent use) as "dramatic romances." So soon as one notes these distinctions of type, it becomes obvious that in his earliest period Shakespeare experimented with history, comedy, and tragedy, doing rather more work in the first-named form than in either of the others; that somewhat later he devoted himself increasingly to comedy; that somewhat later, again, to tragedy; and that his final period was one of new experimentation in the tragic-comic form. These facts have led to a common practice of dividing his plays, and their author's career, among four distinctive periods, roughly dated 1590-1594, 1594-1601, 1601-1608, and 1608-1613.

This arrangement of Shakespeare's playwriting activity has given rise to a discussion, now long-continued, as to whether the succession of his various kinds of drama was due mainly to changes in the popular demand, to the influence exerted by fellow-dramatists, or to some cause to be found in the poet's emotional or spiritual history.

The discussion in question has centered chiefly around the provenance of the plays of Shakespeare's last period, that of the dramatic romances, from 1608-1613. Previously, from 1601-1608, the dramatist's dominant artistic interest was undeniably tragic. During these years he was immersed in the problem of presenting dramatically the results of certain elements of weakness and vice in human character. After 1608, approximately, the tone changes. In the so-called dramatic romances we continue to see the suffering brought about by sin and weakness; but the colors used are less somber, and in the end the evil men turn from their ways and live. The dominant characters are men of good will, and the motto of the group is Prospero's saying: "The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance." [1]

Moreover, these dramatic romances do not generally demand the intense emotional and intellectual concentration

1. The Tempest, V, i, 28.

which the tragedies require. They prefer an easier sort of theatrical excitement. They depend for their effect upon complicated situations, upon violent contrast of character, upon masques and other stage spectacles, and upon sheer surprise. Above all, the romances contain effective denouements. The ending is happy, although the passions displayed in the first part of these works are such as would normally lead to tragedy.

It is the purpose of this thesis to collect the views of critics, chiefly of the present century, relative to the cause, or causes, of Shakespeare's changing from the writing of tragedies to dramatic romances in order to make clear the present state of scholarly opinion on this question. Accordingly, Chapter II will have to do with the critical conception that the final plays of Shakespeare are a reflexion of his own emotional development. Chapter III will deal with those critics who hold that Shakespeare in writing these last plays was responding to the changing demands of his audience. Chapter IV will list the opinions of those who maintain that the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher was responsible for Shakespeare's turning to dramatic romances. In Chapter V will be presented the views of those critics who minimize or deny entirely such influence of Beaumont

and Fletcher, and who find the germ of the dramatic romances in previous plays of Shakespeare. Chapter VI will provide a recapitulation of critical opinion and put forward certain conclusions of the writer of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF MOODS

The founding of the New Shakespearian Society in 1873 provided a landmark in Shakespearian criticism. The leader of this society was F. J. Furnivall who set his followers to work on the collective project of establishing the order of the writing of Shakespeare's plays. The method employed was the observation of all allusions to or within the plays, and the statistical observation of the peculiarities of the dramatist's style. The results, with some modifications, have been generally accepted by subsequent scholars. Thus, in 1875, when Edmund Dowden came to write Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, he began with a clear idea of the order in which Shakespeare's plays were written.

Dowden was responsible for the conception that Shakespeare's "art life" could be divided into four periods: the years of experiment; the period when "he was gaining a sure grasp of the positive facts of life"; 1 the period of the great tragedies; and the last, or tranquil, period

1. Dowden, p. 312.

when Shakespeare, after some years of turmoil, reached serenity.[2] It was Dowden's contention that these four periods are simply a reflection of Shakespeare's emotional development. The names Dowden gave those periods, "In the Workshop," "In the World," "In the Depths," and "On the Heights," show clearly why his view has been called "The Theory of Moods." [3]

Dowden's "Theory of Moods" has influenced greatly subsequent Shakespearian scholarship. Scholars and critics have generally accepted his view that Shakespeare's plays can be conveniently divided into four periods. However, many assign causes for this division other than the dramatist's changing moods. Further, among those who agree with Dowden that the plays are a reflexion of Shakespeare's emotional development, we find opinions quite at variance with Dowden's.

In his "Introduction" to the Leopold Shakespeare, written in 1877, Furnivall accepted Dowden's views completely. He states strongly that the plays taken in their right order contain the true history of the growth and progress of Shakespeare's soul. [4]

2. Dowden, Shakespeare, pp. 330, 334.
3. Ibid., p. 48.
4. Furnivall, pp. xx - xxi.

Before the end of the nineteenth century other important critics had ranged themselves with Dowden and Furnivall, especially in regard to the plays of the fourth period which concern us in this thesis. Ten Brink, in 1893, [5] Brandes in 1895,[6] and Boas in 1896,[7] all hold that Shakespeare, after a period of internal stress, during which he wrote his great tragedies, regained the serenity which is evidenced in the dramatic romances. Thus Brandes[8] held that Shakespeare in Timon of Athens made a final attempt at tragedy, but being overwrought by the strenuous effort he had put into that type of writing, had broken down in health. Brandes' thought is that Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, nursed her father back to health. Then, the dramatist, with a fresh outlook on life, was able to compose the plays of his final period. According to Brandes:

> Shakespeare had shouted himself hoarse and his fury is spent. The fever is over and convalescence has set in. The darkened sun shines out once more and the gloomy sky shines blue again. 9

5. Bernhard Ten Brink, Five Lectures on Shakespeare, pp. 93 - 95.

6. Georg Brandes, William Shakespeare, p. 275

7. Frederick Boas, Shakespere and His Predecessors, p. 504.

8. Brandes, op. cit.

9. Ibid., p. 271.

Continuing these comments, Brandes writes: "Once more he finds life worth living, the earth beautiful, enchantingly fantastically attractive, and those who dwell on it worthy of his love." [10]

To Boas the change in Shakespeare's subject-matter and manner of writing was due to his closer association with Stratford. Thus he writes:

> Amidst the fields and glades of Warwickshire, the darker problems of life must have thrust themselves less imperiously within his ken than in the crowded society of the capital, and the adventurer restored to the home of his youth found his natural theme in tales of reunion between long-parted kindred, of penitence and forgiveness for wrongs done in distant years. [11]

Sidney Lee, in 1898, [12] also admits a change in Shakespeare's mental and emotional outlook before the writing of the dramatic romances, but he unexcitingly contends that this was nothing more than the inward change which usually takes place in a man when he arrives at middle age. Lee argues that the spirit of calm of the final plays is in harmony with the fifth decade of the playwright's life.

10. Brandes, op. cit., p. 272.

11. Boas, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

12. Lee, A Life of Shakespeare, pp. 248-249.

In the present century Dowden has had many noted followers. It is scarcely necessary to list all of them. However, it will be in order to summarize the views of a number of the most noted with reference to Shakespeare's changing from the writing of tragedies to that of the dramatic romances.

For Stopford Brooke, [13] writing in 1905, the last plays definitely evidence a change in mood on the part of Shakespeare. For example, Brooke tells us that the main drift of The Tempest is to teach forgiveness. This author contends that we feel that Shakespeare forgives the world, to which he had been hostile, and so reaches fresh life.

Walter Raleigh, [14] in 1907, tells us that the dramatic romances are pervaded by quiet and happiness, forgiveness and reunion. The new happiness has been wrung from experience. Shakespeare had explored the abysses of human suffering by means of his imagination, and in the end fatigue loosed his grip upon the hard facts of life. According to Raleigh, the marvel is that Shakespeare won his way back to the world where play was possible.

Shakespeare's last plays, so John Masefield [15] writes

13. Brooke, On Ten Plays of Shakespeare, pp. 295-296.
14. Raleigh, Shakespeare, pp. 209-212.
15. Masefield, William Shakespeare, p. 230.

in 1911, were conceived in a romantic mood. One characteristic of these plays is the prevalence of the passion of remorse. But remorse is a romantic, not a tragic, passion, the mood which follows the tragic mood.

One year later, C. H. Herford [16] observes that the bitterness of Hamlet and of Lear is lightened in the later Roman plays and the dramatic romances witness to a serener inner world.

Writing in 1917, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch,[17] speaks of the mellowly romantic atmosphere which pervades Shakespeare's last plays. In these plays Shakespeare was endeavoring to do something better and more difficult than he had previously accomplished. Treating of forgiveness, atonement, and reconciliation, he attempted a harder thing than to justify the ways of God to man: the slow process of the reconciliation, under God, of man with man.

In his Shakespeare, a Survey, published in 1925, E. K. Chambers reiterates certain observations made earlier in his "Introductions" to the Red Letter Shakespeare, 1904-1908. Chambers is convinced that a profound change of spiritual mood underlies the transition from the tragedies to the romances. He states that at the conclusion of his

16. Herford, Shakespeare, pp. 15-16.

17. Quiller-Couch, Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship, pp. 197-204, 205, 213, passim.

writing of tragedies, Shakespeare underwent something similar to a spiritual conversion. The result of this experience is the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation pervading the romances. [18]

G. F. Bradby, writing in the year following, is quite in agreement with Chambers. In comparing the tragedies and the romances "we become aware of a gradual change in Shakespeare's outlook on life." [19]

Tucker Brooke, writing in 1935, recalls the comments of Boas which have been previously given:

> Behind the irregularity and strangeness of these dramatic romances seems to lie the realization of a man long steeped in the business of the world, of the distance he has traveled from his youth, and the longing to recapture once again the rapture and the loyalties of the golden age. [20]

Conservative present-day opinion on this whole matter is summed up by the well-known American scholar, William Allan Neilson. Thus he writes:

> With the three later divisions the case is very different. Here the temptation is obvious to interpret them respectively as periods of sunshine, gloom, and placidity in the dramatist's life. Up to a certain point this interpretation need not be quarrelled with. There is an appropriateness to the prime of life in the creation of the buoyant personalities of the Comedies and in the triumphant extrication of

18. Chambers, p. 290.

19. Bradby, About Shakespeare and His Plays, p. 55.

20. Brooke, Shakespeare's Principal Plays, p. 73.

> them from all tangle of opposing forces invented only to be foiled. The profundity of reflexion and brooding on the mystery of life, of which the Tragedies give abundant evidence, were only possible, in the degree in which we find them, to a man who had already lived and seen much. It is hardly possible to refrain from associating the victories of good over evil in the Dramatic Romances with a mood natural to a sane spirit contemplating the close of his career a world which had brought to him in large measure the things for which he had mainly striven. 21

After writing the above, however, Neilson goes on to remark:

> But it is easy to press this method too far. The succession of the various kinds of drama in Shakespeare's production brings a suggestive relation to what appears to have been the popular demand of the time. 22

In the following chapter we shall turn our attention to those scholars who maintain that the change from the tragedies to the dramatic romances was due, not to Shakespeare's altered mood, but rather to the demands of the Elizabethan theatre-going audience.

21. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill, "Introduction", Twenty-three Plays of William Shakespeare, p. xiii.

22. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE ALTERED DEMANDS OF THE ELIZABETHAN AUDIENCE

One of the first critics to maintain that Shakespeare, in the writing of his plays, followed general dramatic movements rather than his personal experiences and changing moods was Ashley H. Thorndike. Writing in 1901, [1] Thorndike asserted that Shakespeare turned from tragedy to dramatic romances because of the popularity of the latter form. We shall leave to the following chapter Thorndike's particular contention that Shakespeare's turning to dramatic romances was caused by the success of Beaumont and Fletcher with such plays. For the present we shall deal with the more general theory that the "Last Plays" owe their substance and style to changed theatrical fashions.

Influenced apparently by Thorndike, George P. Baker endeavored to prove in 1907 that Shakespeare gradually learned to express himself while complying with the needs of his audience. Because the theatre-going audience about 1608 was ready for dramatic story-telling, it was natural that Shakespeare should turn to dramatic romances.

1. Thorndike, The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare, p. 5.

Thus he writes:

> What is more natural for a man who has sounded the depths of human feeling in the tragedies, and has faced successfully the most complicated problems of technique, than that he should, as the public interest forces him to, return to an earlier romantic mood, both experiment in technical problems, and in his mere story-telling, though it steadily shows all his old mastery of character and at times all of his old knowledge of his audience, grow a little more personal in phrase, and somewhat careless as to the minute details of technique which had helped to give him his supreme position. 2

Baker further states that, although the last plays of Shakespeare were successful in their own day, they have been rarely revived. He argues, consequently, that they were all too well adapted to contemporary taste:

> Does not that look as if their success depended more upon social condition in the audience of their times than upon permanent elements of a successful appeal when presented on the stage? 3

In 1916, Brander Matthews also vigorously dissented from the "Theory of Moods" and emphasized Shakespeare's disposition to give his audience what it desired:

> What the spectators wanted to see - - this was what the Elizabethan playwrights sought

2. Baker, The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist, p. 303.

3. Ibid.

> always to supply, Shakespeare as well as the rest. He was a popular playwright, as Professor Bradley asserts, explaining that this means not only that many of Shakespeare's plays, 'were favorites in his day but that he wrote, mainly at least, for the popular kind of audience, and that within certain limits he conformed to its taste.' 4

Specifically with reference to the dramatic romances, Matthews has this to say:

> He [Shakespeare] had never sought for originality of form; he had willingly accepted the framework of the chronicle-play from Marlowe and the formula of the tragedy-in-blood from Kyd. He had used the pattern of Lyly in one early comedy, and he had borrowed the method of Greene in another. He was singularly susceptible to the prevailing influences of the playhouse; and it was natural enough that he should avail himself of the new type, the theatrical effectiveness of which must have been immediately evident to him as an actual actor in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. 5

This line of thought was continued by H. N. McCracken in 1920. He regards the four periods of Shakespeare's career not as manifestations of his changing moods but as the result of his conforming to the altering taste of the audience. McCracken's thought is epitomized in the following statement:

4. Matthews, Shakespeare as a Playwright, p. 300.

5. Ibid., p. 331.

> As fashions in dress and sports keep shifting, fashions in literature are changing just as constantly, and the dominant type may alter two or three times during one man's life. If an author changes to meet these demands, it is important to know that one of his plays was merry comedy because written at a time when merry comedies filled all the playhouses; and that another is sober tragedy because composed while most of the theatres were acting and demanding sober tragedy.
>
> Now Shakespeare not only improved a great deal while composing his plays, but also conformed, to some extent at least, to the different tastes of his audience at different periods of his life. [6]

Benjamin Brawley wrote similarly in 1921:

> We have already observed that there were some changing fashions in the Elizabethan Drama. Sometimes Shakespeare helped to make these fashions; more frequently he followed the dictates of popular taste.[7]

One of the times Shakespeare followed the dictates of popular taste, so says Brawley, was his change from tragedy to dramatic romance.

In the year following, 1922, Raymond MacDonald Alden attacked vigorously the view that personal emotions and

6. McCracken, An Introduction to Shakespeare, pp. 73-74.

7. Brawley, A Short History of the English Drama, p. 81.

experiences were the controlling reasons for changes in the tone of Shakespeare's work:

> If our survey of Shakespeare's life, as given us through external sources, exhibited any biographic reasons why he should have written chiefly comedy in one period, and chiefly tragedy in another, it would no doubt be significant to find that he actually did so; but in the absence of such evidence, the passage from the types of his work to the facts of his personal life is one only for acrobats of the imagination. . . The point to remember is that there is no obvious and determinable relationship between objective and subjective conditions. We have no reason to suppose that Shakespeare found the writing of tragedy easiest when he was at odds with the world. He is quite as likely to have passed upstairs from a merry bout of words with Mistress Mountjoy, his landlady's daughter, to work out the agonies of Othello's temptation, as to the writing of a pastoral clownish scene. [8]

The view that Shakespeare in writing his last plays was following a contemporary trend received substantial support from Joseph Quincy Adams in his very successful Life of William Shakespeare, published in 1925. Mr. Adams not only maintains that Shakespeare was following current fashions in the theater, but he also gives plausible reasons for the coming about of the new fashions. He says in part:

8. Alden, Shakespeare, p. 103.

> Upon examining contemporary theatrical history we discover that in turning to romance and tragi-comedy Shakespeare merely followed the trend of the day, yielded, as a successful playwright must, to changes imposed by altering conditions. The Age of Elizabeth was no more. And the great Elizabethan drama, after lighting up the first few years of the succeeding reign, had passed away too, giving place to the new Jacobean drama, differing in substance and in kind. During the reign of 'the Fairy Queen' who was English in every fibre of her being, sharing in full measure the sympathies and intellectual interests of her people, the drama had been essentially national. Playwrights wrote for the masses assembled in open-air theatres, who applauded what they liked and vociferously condemned what they disliked, even at times wrecking the stage in their disapproval. They alone constituted the jury before which the success of a play was tried. Elizabeth stood aloof. When a play pleased the citizens and apprentices of London, she summoned that play to the Court; and what pleased London audiences.... invariably pleased Her Majesty. . . The dramatists thus did not have to consider the Court; they kept always before them the middle classes, upon whose favor their success and prosperity solely depended. 9

The arrival of the foreigner James I and his Court of brilliantly attired and be-jeweled pleasure-loving nobles effected a profound transformation in the trend of

9. Adams, pp. 411-412.

the drama. As the monarch's interest was not merely royal but intensely personal, it was inevitable that the aim of the dramatist in the point of audience satisfaction should shift from the common people to the pleasure of the Court. And how vastly these two audiences differed in their moral and esthetical approach to life and its problems! Adams observes that as a theme for entertainment the mental anguish and spiritual turmoil involved in the business of living the real every-day life of this world did not appeal to the vacuous-minded court engaged in artificial habits of life and thought. Thus it was that, in a sort of spirit of compromise, a new dramatic form came to the fore in which the illusion of a "happy-ending" proved more desirable than the old tragic denouements to an audience which sought light, fantastic amusement rather than a means of participating in the soul-stirring emotions with which human nature must constantly contend. The tragicomedy with its combined elements of court masque, fanciful theme, and bizarre settings offered a romantic type of drama wholly acceptable to the royal social circles of the later Shakespearian era. [10]

10. Adams, op. cit., p. 412-413.

W. W. Lawrence makes a rather thorough study of the whole question in the final chapter of his Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, published in 1931. He does not deny all validity to the opinion that the change from tragedy to dramatic romance was due to alterations in Shakespeare's temper and view of life. But he thinks that too much has been made of it. Far more important in their influence upon Shakespeare's playwriting were the changed demands of the theater-going audience. 11

We shall conclude this present list of authorities with E. M. W. Tillyard, whose Shakespeare's Last Plays appeared in 1938. "Some have made much of the theatrical condition of the time," he says, "and have seen in them the reason why Shakespeare introduced certain changes in his last plays." 12 These changes, Tillyard feels, were primarily brought about by the fact that the stage had moved to the Blackfriars although the Globe was not completely abandoned. He goes on to say that "Shakespeare, with the opportunism that always marked his stage career, could not possibly have remained indifferent to the change." 13

11. Lawrence, pp. 12-13.
12. Tillyard, p. 4.
13. Ibid., p. 5.

In this chapter, then, we have listed a number of eminent Shakespearian scholars who hold that the dramatist's changing from the writing of tragedy to that of dramatic romance was caused by the altered demands of the theatre-going public. In the next chapter we shall consider the question whether Shakespeare changed to the composition of dramatic romances specifically because of the success of Beaumont and Fletcher.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

As was stated, at the beginning of the previous chapter, Ashley H. Thorndike was the first well-known Shakespearian scholar to rebel against Dowden's generally accepted "Theory of Moods." He was also the first to put forth the claim that Shakespeare in his dramatic romances was following a type of playwriting inaugurated and brought to success by Beaumont and Fletcher. Thorndike's thin book, The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspere, privately printed in 1901,[1] is an important volume in the history of Shakespearian criticism.

After recalling Shakespeare's seemingly abrupt change from the writing of tragedy to that of dramatic romance, Thorndike observes:

> The only explanation that I know to have been offered is that of a subjective change in Shakspere. It is stated that he passed out of a period of life, gloomy, passionate, full of suffering, into one of philosophic calm, renewed optimism and final reconciliation: or as Mr. Dowden puts

1. Thorndike, Worcester, Massachusetts, Press of Oliver B. Wood.

> it, he passed 'out of the depths' and rested 'on the heights'. It would be stupid to deny the possibility of such a change. No one imagines that Shakspere's mind was the same when he was writing Hamlet as when he was writing the Tempest; and what actual personal circumstances may have accompanied these varying creative moods is certainly open to conjecture without any possibility of disproof. Such subjective explanations, however, are at best only attempts to interpret the author's moods in terms of the aesthetic effect his work exerts upon us: and they give us few clues as to the actual methods of his creative art. We are on far safer grounds when we study objective influences; and a mere re-insistence on our point of view -- the view of Shakspere as an Elizabethan dramatist -- must lead to the conclusion that no decided change in the character of his plays would have been likely to take place without some objective cause. 2

Mr. Thorndike then boldly asserts that he finds such a cause for Shakespeare's change in the production at about the same time of a series of romances by Beaumont and Fletcher. He believes that Shakespeare's romances show definite evidences of the influence of these dramatists. In order to substantiate his beliefs, he proposes to undertake (1) an examination of the dates of Shakespeare's and of Beaumont and Fletcher's romances

2. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 6.

in order to determine if the latter preceded, and (2) an examination of such of Beaumont and Fletcher's romances as date early enough in order to discover their distinguishing characteristics, and a like examination of Shakespeare's three romances -- Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest -- in search of indications of Beaumont and Fletcher's influence. [3]

It will be noticed that Thorndike does not include Pericles among Shakespeare's dramatic romances. His reasons for this omission will be noted later.

After an elaborate and erudite examination of the dates of Shakespeare's and of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatic romances, Thorndike arrives at conclusions eminently satisfactory to himself. His belief is that the following plays were written in the years noted.

Beaumont and Fletcher:

Thierry and Theodoret	1607?
Philaster	1608?
Four Plays in One	1608?
The Maid's Tragedy	1609?
Cupid's Revenge	1609-10?
A King and No King	1611

3. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 92

Shakespeare:

Cymbeline	"Probably within a year of 1610." 4
The Tempest	"Probably written and acted late in 1610 or early in 1611." 5
The Winter's Tale	"Between January 1 and May 15, 1611." 6

The interrogation-points after the dates assigned to the Beaumont and Fletcher plays are Mr. Thorndike's. He admits that he cannot give exact dates. These six Beaumont and Fletcher plays constitute a new and distinct type of drama. Shakespeare's three plays are of the same type. It is Thorndike's conclusion that some of Beaumont and Fletcher's romances certainly preceded Shakespeare's, and that six of the Beaumont and Fletcher romances were written by the time that Shakespeare had produced three.

Having established the priority of the Beaumont and Fletcher dramatic romances, Thorndike then proceeds to study their six plays, listed above, and then the three Shakespearian dramas, -- all this, of course, in the endeavor to find indications of Beaumont and Fletcher's

4. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 30.
5. Ibid., p. 32.
6. Ibid., p. 33.

influence. His conclusion is that all these romances show a revival of romantic material, a use of new dramatic methods, and an effort to secure lively action on the stage with some added spectacular effects. These plays, he tells us:

> . . . resembled each other so closely in all their distinctive traits that it seemed impossible that they could have been produced independently of each other. While some of these resemblances seemed due to current conditions and common purposes, we concluded that one set of romances was indebted to the other for the defining traits of the type. And there were not lacking certain indications that Shakspere was the debtor. 7

In order to strengthen his position, Thorndike makes a particular study of Beaumont and Fletcher's Philaster and Shakespeare's Cymbeline. His thought here is that, since Cymbeline is generally considered the first of Shakespeare's dramatic romances, it is in this play, if anywhere, that we may expect to find strong evidences of the Beaumont and Fletcher influence. Thorndike thus sums up the result of this study:

> An examination of Philaster and Cymbeline, each an early representative of either type and each written

7. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 168.

> for the King's men before the fall of 1610, revealed further specific similarities which made it almost certain that one influenced the other. Philaster appeared to have been the earlier of the two; but apart from considerations of dates, the general character of the plays indicated that Philaster was the original. This was made still more probable by considerations of the habits and positions of the authors themselves. There seemed good ground for the supposition that Shakespere, desirous of producing a play which should have the same effect on the stage as Philaster, produced in Cymbeline a play of the same type and of many of the same specific characteristics. [8]

Relative to The Winter's Tale and The Tempest, Thorndike states that the Beaumont and Fletcher influence is not so apparent in these plays as in Cymbeline. Nevertheless such influence can still be found. To quote his words:

> In the romances which followed Cymbeline, Shakespere appeared to have so far mastered the romantic type that evidences of imitation became slight, and the plays his by birth rather than by adoption. Instead of degenerating, as it did in Beaumont and Fletcher, into a pretty distinctly conventionalized form, the romance type developed

8. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 168.

> under his genius into the Winter's Tale and The Tempest. Even in these plays he seemed still to be using the methods he had adopted in Cymbeline and still to be answering the same theatrical demand which Beaumont and Fletcher had first supplied. 9

It will have been noted that Thorndike does not include Pericles among Shakespeare's dramatic romances. As we shall see in the following chapter, other scholars, denying the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher, find in this play the beginnings of a new type of Shakespearian drama, that of the dramatic romance. However, Thorndike is confident that a study of Pericles does not invalidate his thesis. His final words are the following:

> About 1608, Philaster was acted as well as Pericles; and two more different plays can hardly be imagined. They not only differ entirely in their methods of construction and their general stage effect; they differ as well in their treatment of the sentimental love story, of the heroine's character, and of the happy ending. Pericles was a return to archaic methods, Philaster was a remarkable dramatic innovation.

9. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 167.

> Probably shortly after these two plays came Cymbeline; and there can be no doubt which play it followed. If Shakspere had already experimented with romantic material and in a romantic mood, he had certainly not determined the characteristics of a new romantic type. If we make all possible allowance for the influence of Pericles and of all other plays dealing with romantic stories upon the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, the evidence remains unimpaired that their type of romance was an innovation and that it distinctly influenced Shakspere's romances. Pericles, however, seems to me in no appreciable degree a precursor of the romances, but rather a return to the old chronological, narrative dramatization of stories of wonderful adventures, such as were popular on the stage even later than 1608. At any rate, for our discussion of the relations between the romances of Shakspere and of Beaumont and Fletcher, it has either little or no significance. 10

Thorndike maintained the views set forth in his The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspere during the approximately thirty remaining years of his scholarly career. Especially in How Shakspere Came to Write the Tempest, 1916, and English Comedy, published in 1929, he reiterated his claim that Shakespeare changed from the writing of tragedy to that of the dramatic romance because of the success of Beaumont and Fletcher

10. Thorndike, op. cit., p. 175.

As we shall see, in the next chapter, Thorndike's thesis has not met with universal scholarly acceptance. However, with the passing of years many distinguished scholars have made his views their own.

One of the first of these scholars was Frank Ristine, who, working in 1910, states that:

> . . . the initial success of Philaster even seems to have impelled Shakespeare to undertake the same sort following the Beaumont-Fletcher innovation as the probabilities all indicate. 11

Six years later two scholars ranged themselves on the side of Thorndike. Horace Bridges tells us that:

> . . . the success of such works by other writers may account in part for Shakespeare's turning his genius in this direction after his years of tragedy were over, instead of returning to comedy pure and simple. 12

And Brander Matthews contends that:

> At the close of his career he had turned from historical tragedies to romantic tragicomedies, not primarily because of any personal experience but because two young

11. Ristine, English Tragi-comedy, p. 113.

12. Bridges, Our Fellow Shakespeare, p. 246.

> dramatists were succeeding in the field. 13

And further:

> . . . it seems to me highly probable that Shakespeare was again, as so often in his career, the borrower and adapter, and that his change from tragedy to tragi-comedy, marked by Cymbeline may be credited to an initiative received from the younger dramatists. 14

George Pierce Baker, in 1921, is inclined to accept this opinion of Thorndike. Thus he remarks:

> It is certainly striking that about 1608, when these plays of Beaumont and Fletcher appear, Shakespeare turned from his tragedies to something quite similar, in Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. . . . It cannot be proved that Beaumont and Fletcher are the innovators of this new romanticism but they work in it so consistently when collaborating, and show such an amount of it, that one is almost forced to accept the opinion of Professor Thorndike and grant them leadership in the matter. 15

According to Benjamin Brawley, also writing in

13. Matthews, Shakespearean Studies, p. 178.

14. Ibid., p. 176.

15. Baker, "Introduction," Selected Plays by Beaumont and Fletcher, p. x.

1921, Shakespeare was influenced profoundly by the romantic tragicomedy initiated by Beaumont and Fletcher. [16] So too, Raymond Macdonald Alden, in 1922:

> . . . the young dramatists Beaumont and Fletcher were beginning their brilliant joint career at this time, in plays of precisely the type indicated and were suggesting to Shakespeare new tricks of technique in tragi-comic art. [17]

We have already listed Joseph Quincy Adams as an opponent of the "Theory of Moods." There is no doubt in Adams' mind that Shakespeare in the composition of his dramatic romances was following a new fashion of playwriting in which the leaders were Beaumont and Fletcher. Thus he writes in 1925:

> In the production of tragi-comedies and romances -- perhaps we should add the hybrid form romantic tragi-comedy -- the recognized leaders were Beaumont and Fletcher, the young dramatists recently engaged by the Globe Company. Their plays, mirroring the superficial and brilliant life of the Court, and catering to the taste of the upper classes, attained greater success with artificial emotion and pleasing surprises than did the serious tragedies of Shakespeare with their compelling interest in character, and their moral earnestness. . . . It is thus not strange that Shakespeare, finding his

16. Brawley, A Short History of the English Drama, pp. 81-82.

17. Alden, Shakespeare, p. 322.

> plays old-fashioned, should turn from tragedy to the now popular romance and tragi-comedy. 18

Adams points out that Shakespeare did not accept the new fashions whole-heartedly:

> Shakespeare's moral fibre was too strong to let him be drawn into either the sly obscenity of wit or the morally unwholesome plot. He met the new fashions only half-way. He began to dramatize light and fanciful stories, in which the passion of love, romantic, but not sentimental or pathological, took the place of the more serious issues he had handled in his tragedies, but he insisted on maintaining the lofty ethical ideal which had characterized his earlier plays, and which we must believe was inherent in his nature. 19

As we have seen previously, Edmund Kercheval Chambers is one of the most distinguished proponents of the "Theory of Moods". However, he writes in 1925:

> Cymbeline owes its inspiration to Philaster, the elements of whose plot it reproduces in a new and ingenious combination, while the slandered and disguised Imogene has her double prototype in the slandered Arethusa and the disguised Bellario. 20

Presumably, Shakespeare, having emerged from the

18. Adams, A Life of William Shakespeare, p. 414.

19. Adams, op. cit., p. 415-416.

20. Chambers, Shakespeare, a Survey, p. 287.

tragic mood during which he wrote his tragedies, expresses his new-found serenity in writing lighter plays after the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher.

A year later, T. A. Harrison expresses approval of Thorndike's views. He writes:

> Sufficient evidence has been adduced by Thorndike to show that in all probability Shakespeare's Cymbeline was written after Beaumont and Fletcher's Philaster. This critic points out the similarity existing between the two plays sufficiently to prove that in writing Cymbeline Shakespeare drew from Philaster. 21

In 1931, W. W. Lawrence, after decrying the "Theory of Moods", gives cautious assent to Thorndike's position:

> With the Philaster of Beaumont and Fletcher (1608?) romance spread its golden banners to the winds once more. Again the hearts of men turned to idyllic scenes in far-off lands, to happy issues out of affliction, to graceful and poetic verse. The success of Philaster led to the production of other plays of similar character. A convincing demonstration of the probable effect of this on Shakespeare's latest plays has been given by Thorndike. The impossibility of dating Philaster exactly makes absolute proof impossible, but it is clear that nothing else so well explains Shakespeare's scenes of happy abandonment to unreality, in the characteristic manner of the younger dramatists. 22

21. Harrison, Publication of the Modern Language Association, XLI, March, 1926, p. 302.

22. Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, p.223.

In the early thirties also, Walter Pritchard Eaton and J. W. Mackail join the Thorndike group. Eaton says, "Doubtless the success of their Philaster in 1609 influenced Shakespeare to try his hand at Cymbeline." [23] Mackail affirms, "As usual, he Shakespeare was not an innovator; he did what other dramatists were doing." [24]

Another scholar who considers Beaumont and Fletcher as innovators in the matter of tragicomedy is Tillyard who in 1938 writes:

> It is most probable that Fletcher's verse encouraged Shakespeare to introduce every now and then a new style of stillness and sweetness into his last plays, for instance, in some of the speeches of Belarius in Cymbeline, and in the statue scene in The Winter's Tale. As to Fletcher's method of manipulating melodramatic scenes for their own sake in isolation, Shakespeare may well have used it experimentally in Cymbeline, as in Imogen's waking beside the headless Cloten. [25]

The same critic comes to the following conclusion: "Now if this subservience of motivation to emotional crisis is both new in Shakespeare and habitual in Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare must have derived it from them." [26]

23. Eaton, The Drama in English, p. 137.
24. Mackail, The Approach to Shakespeare, p. 99.
25. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Last Plays, p. 8.
26. Ibid., p. 5.

In the last decade Peter Alexander and Henry W. Wells have given precedence to Beaumont and Fletcher in the development of the dramatic romance. Alexander calls these dramatists innovators with "their heroes and heroines playing their high-born parts as in a pageant." 27 Wells asserts that "on the whole Shakespeare seems rather to have followed than to have led in the direction of Cavalier sentimentality." 28

Margaret Webster, the well-known director of Shakespearian plays, added her voice to the increasing chorus in 1943. According to Miss Webster:

> Shakespeare was undoubtedly influenced toward the end of his life by the romantic comedies of Beaumont, Fletcher and their contemporaries, which were becoming increasingly the fashion. 29

Miss Webster's words are indicative of the popularization of the Thorndike thesis.

Finally, in 1948, G. B. Harrison, the distinguished Elizabethan scholar, writes:

> Beaumont and Fletcher have none of the depth of Shakespeare, but they have great skill in writing dialogue, and an excellent stage sense. No one could sit in the theatre and watch Shakespeare's greatest tragedies unmoved; Beaumont

27. Alexander, Shakespeare's Life and Art, p. 201.

28. Wells, Elizabethan and Jocobean Playwrights, p.115.

29. Webster, Shakespeare Without Tears, p. 272.

> and Fletcher kept the audience interested and mildly excited from beginning to end, but they never seared the emotions. It is more than a coincidence that Shakespeare's next play, Cymbeline, with its enormous complexity, false emotion, and interminable explanation and reconciliation, should bear some resemblance to Philaster. 30

With such a number of scholars holding the opinion that Beaumont and Fletcher's success with the dramatic romance was the cause of Shakespeare's changing to this type, it would seem that the question is definitely settled. But this is not the case. As we shall see, in the next chapter, there are many important scholars who either minimize this influence or deny it altogether.

30. Harrison, Shakespeare, 23 Plays and the Sonnets, p. 50.

CHAPTER V

PERICLES AND EARLIER PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

As we have seen in the last chapter, Thorndike has not been able to date precisely the dramatic romances of Shakespeare and those of Beaumont and Fletcher. Neither has any other scholar been able to do so up to the present. This lack of certainty relative to dates has militated against complete acceptance of Thorndike's thesis.

One of Thorndike's principal arguments is the close resemblance of Shakespeare's Cymbeline to Beaumont and Fletcher's Philaster. Cymbeline, according to Thorndike, the first of Shakespeare's dramatic romances, is so like Philaster in plot, in characterization, and in mood that one play must have been the inspiration of the other. Every consideration, including that of date, so Thorndike contends, indicates that Philaster was the original. However, he cannot prove with absolute certainty that Philaster antedated Cymbeline, and hence his argument is not entirely conclusive.

For a number of scholars, therefore, the matter is still undecided. Thus Hazelton Spencer writes:

> More interesting is Philaster's relation to Cymbeline (c.1610). Professor A. H. Thorndike has argued for the priority of Beaumont and Fletcher, and for their

> strong influence on Shakespeare's final group of dramatic romances. Lacking precise dates, we cannot be sure who deserves credit for introducing this type of romantic tragicomedy. 1.

Again, Edd Winfield Parks and Richmond Croom Beatty have the following to say in their The English Drama 900-1542:

> Apparently the plot of Philaster was the invention of the authors, although many of the situations are reminiscent of Shakespeare and of earlier dramatists. The most notable resemblance is to Shakespeare's Cymbeline: until the dates both of Cymbeline and Philaster can be determined with absolute certainty, it is impossible to decide which play is derivative. . . 2

The matter becomes more involved by the consideration of Pericles which scholarly opinion holds to have been written in late 1607 or early 1608. As we have seen, Thorndike holds that Pericles was not a dramatic innovation, such as Philaster was, but merely one of the old chronological dramatizations of wonderful adventures that had long been popular on the Elizabethan stage. For Thorndike, Shakespeare in his last plays was inspired not by Pericles but by Philaster. Nevertheless, there is a group of scholars who contend that Pericles

1. Spencer, Elizabethan Plays, p. 798.
2. Parks and Beatty, p. 992.

is the first of the dramatic romances, the forerunner and inspiration not only of the remaining plays of Shakespeare but of the romances of Beaumont and Fletcher as well.

Before listing the names and the opinions of those scholars who hold that Pericles, not Philaster, is the determining influence relative to Shakespeare's last plays, it is well to point out that today it is generally conceded that Pericles is only in part Shakespeare's. The last three acts are usually held to be his, the first two being assigned to another playwright. According to Neilson and Hill:

> There is, however, no agreement as to the manner in which these elements came to be united. Shakespeare may have revised an earlier play, keeping the first two acts substantially unchanged; he may have left unfinished a play on Marina which a minor playwright completed; he may have cooperated with another writer from the outset. The occurrence even in the earlier acts of passages and phrases with a Shakespearian ring suggest the usual method of collaboration, whereby the joint authors discuss and retouch the whole play; on the other hand, it would seem that in the first two acts Shakespeare's interest was never more than superficially engaged. The collaborator cannot be identified. 3

3. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill, The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, New Cambridge Edition, p. 425.

Prior to further discussion of Pericles, it might be convenient to give a short summary of this least-read of Shakespeare's plays.

Act I

(It will be remembered that Gower serves as the chorus of this drama. A speech of his precedes each act.)

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, is a suitor for the hand of the beautiful daughter of King Antiochus. He who aspires for her must, under penalty of death, solve a riddle in which the King has concealed the secret of their incest. Guessing this secret infamy of the King and his life being threatened in consequence, Pericles leaves his government in the hands of his honest minister, Helicanus, and sails to Tarsus.

Act II

Pericles learns that he is not safe from Antiochus in Tarsus. When he next appears, he has been cast destitute upon the coast of Pentapolis, the only survivor of a shipwreck. He recovers from the waves his suit of armor, buys a horse with a jewel, goes to the court of King Simonides and jousts for the love of his daughter, Thaisa. Emerging successfully from the tournament, he weds Thaisa.

Act III

After the death of Antiochus, Pericles decides to return to Tyre. On the journey thither, in the midst of a dreadful storm, Thaisa gives birth to a daughter, afterwards named Marina. Thaisa supposedly dies and is buried at sea. However, the chest in which her body has been placed is washed ashore at Ephesus. Here she is revived by Cerimon, a physician. Thinking her husband drowned, she becomes a priestess in the temple of Diana. Pericles takes his daughter, Marina, to Tarsus where he leaves her with the governor and his wife, Cleon and Dionyza.

Act IV

Years have passed. Marina has grown so beautiful and gifted that she has become a general wonder. Unfortunately Dionyza is so jealous of her accomplishments that she designs to kill her. Marina is saved by pirates who take her to Mytilene and sell her to the keeper of a brothel. Here her piety and purity win the admiration of Lysimachus, the Governor of Mytilene. As a result, she is permitted to take up an honest calling. Meanwhile, Pericles has gone to Tarsus to bring his daughter home. He is bowed down with grief at the false report of her death.

Act V

Returning to Tyre, Pericles' ship is driven to Mytilene. Here, largely because of her resemblance to her mother, Thaisa, he discovers and recovers Marina. A dream directs him, then, to go to the temple of Diana at Ephesus, there to recount the story of his life. This he does with the result that the priestess Thaisa, his lost wife, recognizes him. She is thereupon reunited to her husband and daughter. Marina and Lysimachus are married and made rulers of Tyre. Pericles and Thaisa, King Simonides having died, return to rule in Pentapolis.

In point of time, so far as the present writer has been able to discover, Georg Brandes was the first scholar to regard this sensational play as the determining influence upon Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. Writing in 1895, he says: "It is deeply interesting to trace in this sombre yet fantastically romantic play of Pericles, the germs of all his succeeding works." 4 Brandes also believes that Philaster derives from Pericles:

4. Brandes, William Shakespeare, p. 590.

"Shakespeare must have witnessed its [Philaster's] triumphant performance with strangely mingled feelings, for it could but strike him as being in many ways an echo of his own work." [5]

In 1906, we have Morton Luce considering Pericles as the first of Shakespeare's dramatic romances. In this play, so Luce says, Shakespeare struck into a new dramatic path, and this path he followed through all his remaining career as a dramatist. Luce also states that, "Our chief interest in Pericles lies in the fact that it contains work by Shakespeare which is preparatory to the three romantic plays that follow." [6]

F. E. Schelling, writing in 1908, while not rejecting entirely the views of Thorndike, denies that the characters of Shakespeare's last plays may be reduced to types of Fletcher's. Shakespeare's dramatic romances differ from Fletcher's very decidedly in characterization and construction.[7] A few years later, Schelling notes that "Pericles has features, too, in common with the new tragicomedy."[8]

5. Brandes, William Shakespeare, p. 597.

6. Luce, A Handbook to the Works of William Shakespeare, p. 343.

7. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama, p. 235.

8. Schelling, Elizabethan Playwrights, p. 209.

In 1912, two more American scholars came out in favor of Pericles as the inspiration of the later dramatic romances. Hamilton Wright Mabie states that, "A new note was struck in the Romances, and that note is distinctly sounded in Pericles." 9 Barrett Wendell observed that, "The mood of Cymbeline has a quality which except in feebly tentative Pericles we have not found before." 10

Wendell was also one of the first to maintain that Shakespeare's new genre was not a break with his past. He calls attention to the similarities which exist between Shakespeare's dramatic romances and his earlier plays.

> Very slight examination will show that Cymbeline is a tissue of motives, situations, and characters which in the earlier work of Shakespeare proved theatrically effective. There is enough confusion of identity for a dozen of the earlier comedies; and the old disguised characters are headed, as of old, by the familiar heroine in hose and doublet. Posthumus, Iachimo, and Cloten revive the second comic motive -- later a tragic one -- of self-deception. At least in the matter of jealousy and villainy, too, Posthumus and Iachimo recall Othello and Iago. In the potion

9. Mabie, William Shakespeare, p. 590.

10. Wendell, William Shakespeare, p. 67.

> and death-like sleep of Imogen, we have again the death-like sleep of Juliet. In the villainous Queen, we have another woman faintly recalling Lady Macbeth and the daughters of King Lear. In the balancing of this figure by the pure one of Imogen, we have a suggestion of Cordelia's dramatic value. And so on. If, in some fantastic moment, we could imagine that Shakespeare, like Wagner, had written music-drama, giving to each character, each situation, each mood, its own musical motive, we should find in Cymbeline hardly a new strain. 11

Two years later, Charles Mills Gayley also attacked Thorndike's thesis. He maintains that both Pericles and Cymbeline preceded Philaster. The last-named play he regards as:

> . . . a work of comparatively unestablished dramatists. . . who had but recently been admitted to authorship for the company of which Shakespeare had been for eighteen years the principal, almost the only, playwright. 12

For Gayley, Beaumont and Fletcher are definitely the imitators and the influenced:

> . . . the younger dramatists, since about the beginning of 1610 associated with the King's Company and its enterprises, adapted their technical and poetic style of construction to the somewhat novel method of the seasoned playwright of the King's Servants, as

11. Wendell, op. cit., p. 89.

12. Gayley, Beaumont the Dramatist, p. 118.

> tried and approved in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. 13

Gayley also agrees with Wendell in regarding the dramatic romances of Shakespeare as a development of themes and motives used in plays earlier than *Pericles*. Thus he writes:

> *Cymbeline*, the *Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* are but the flowering of potentialities latent in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*. 14

He goes on to say that:

> . . . the common feature of all these plays, the juxtaposition of idyllic scenes and interest with those of royalty, the combination of sentimental, tragic, and comic incentive to intrigue and crime, the wanderings of an innocent and distressed woman in boy's clothing, and the romantic localization did not appear first in *Philaster* or *Cymbeline*. *Philaster* and *Cymbeline* follow numerous clues in the idyllic-comic of *Love's Labour Lost* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*; in the idyllic-romantic-pathetic of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like it*, and *Twelfth Night*; . . . and in the romantic and tragicomic fusion already attempted in *Much Ado*, *All's Well*, and *Measure for Measure*. 15

13. Gayley, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 391-92.

One of Thorndike's contentions is that Shakespeare in creating the character of Imogen in Cymbeline was inspired by Arethusa and Bellario, characters in Philaster. Touching this point, Gayley states flatly:

> For the character and the trials of Imogen, Shakespeare did not require the inspiration of Beaumont. He had been busied with the figure of Innogen (as he then called her) as early as 1599; for in the 1600 quarto of Much Ado she appears by sheer accident in a stage direction as the wife of Leonato of the play. 16

Horace Bridges, who, as we have seen, thinks that the success of other writers may account for Shakespeare's turning to dramatic romances (1916), admits concerning Pericles that "in the portions which criticism is unanimous in ascribing to Shakespeare, we have foreshadowings of the rarest excellences of his final trilogy." 17

Even Raymond MacDonald Alden, who believes that Beaumont and Fletcher did influence Shakespeare in his last plays (1922), admits that "Cymbeline must have followed not long after Pericles, but it represents a decided development with similar material." 18

16. Gayley, op. cit., p. 392.
17. Bridges, Our Fellow Shakespeare, p. 246.
18. Alden, Shakespeare, p. 322.

Tucker Brooke (1935) also places Pericles in the vanguard of the dramatic romances. "Pericles," he says, "started a vogue (continued by Beaumont and Fletcher) for drama of less intense and realistic import. It opened the way for Shakespeare's comedies of escape." 19

In 1936, J. Middleton Murry insists that the motive for Shakespeare's working on the type of play found in his last period is "ready to our hand in Pericles." "It is," he says, "as certain as any conjecture of the kind can be that Pericles struck Shakespeare, while he worked upon it, as a thing full of potentialities." He maintains that, "in the mis-shapen Pericles are the germs of nearly all the ideas which flowered in the final plays." 20

Thomas Marc Parrott, writing two years later, is inclined to minimize Thorndike's theories. He says,

> It has even been suggested that he [Shakespeare] was influenced by the work of the young pair of playwrights with whom he was now associated. This is, perhaps, too sweeping an assertion; Beaumont and Fletcher did not invent tragic-comedy. They, Beaumont in particular, learned more from Shakespeare than he from them. 21

19. Brooke, Shakespeare's Principal Plays, p. 308.

20. Murry, Shakespeare, p. 319-320.

21. Parrott, Shakespeare, Twenty-Three Plays and Sonnets, p. 24.

In reference to Pericles, Parrott remarks in his later Shakespearian Comedy that:

> Shakespeare's reworking of the old play of Pericles serves as an introduction to this period which includes Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. These plays form a distinct group and represent a shift in technique and a change of tone in Shakespeare's art. 22

In 1947, L. B. Wallis, refers to Pericles as the "determining drama in the immediate background of Philaster as well as Cymbeline." 23 Says Wallis:

> That which appears to have set Beaumont and Fletcher to thinking about the possibilities of romantic drama, and so to devising a tragic-comic mode which would appeal to the theatre-goers was the well-received Pericles, Prince of Tyre. 24

Continuing his comments, he says:

> Considered in connection with what else our playwrights had been observing on the stage over a period of seven or eight years, it should be clear that this play Pericles had a strong claim to being the catalyzing agent which finally precipitated the new brand of tragicomedy in Philaster. 25

Wallis concludes that "When our playwrights [Beaumont and Fletcher] turned to romantic and passionate substance in

22. Parrott, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 366.
23. Wallis, Fletcher, Beaumont and Company, p. 172.
24. Ibid., p. 172.
25. Ibid., p. 163.

Philaster, they simply carried over what they had learned from Shakespeare." [26]

Some of the strongest statements against the position of Throndike have been made by the veteran scholar Hardin Craig in his recently published An Interpretation of Shakespeare (1948). Craig holds that Pericles, not Philaster nor any other play of Beaumont and Fletcher, was the first dramatic romance. The significance of Pericles lies in its introduction of a new subject matter and a new point of view. The theatre-going public were demanding something different and the playwrights were rising to a newer type of creation. Shakespeare was at his best in recasting and adding a new face to an old body. This he exemplified in Pericles, the first of the new dramas. It is this play, according to Craig, which

> . . . uses masque-like devices and establishes a remote romantic atmosphere later found in Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and the tragi-comedies by Beaumont and Fletcher. [27]

Apropos of Thorndike, Craig states bluntly:

> Thorndike's theory, never accepted by many important scholars, is now less confidently held than ever, although there can be no doubt as to the formal similarities to which he called attention. [28]

26. Wallis, Fletcher, Beaumont and Company, p. 172.
27. Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, p. 313.
28. Ibid., p. 314.

We shall conclude this chapter by recounting the views of Neilson and Hill. These, so it appears to the present writer, are peculiarly sane and temperate.

After pointing out certain affiliations of Pericles with both earlier and later plays of Shakespeare, these scholars state:

> However casual or incomplete may be the impress of Shakespeare's art upon the present play, one cannot escape the fact that Pericles bears an important relationship to Shakespeare's last work. There is reason for believing that in handling the material of Pericles Shakespear glimpsed dramatic possibilities which were to be realized with growing sureness in Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest, and that in bringing the experiences of Pericles and Marina to their happy outcome he gave expression to a spiritual attitude which was to make itself felt with increasing emphasis and to have its perfect reflection in The Tempest. 29

In a certain sense, so these scholars continue, there is nothing really novel in the comedies of Shakespeare's last period. Yet they are differentiated from their predecessors by reason of a more grave temper. There is a difference also in the endings of these last plays.

> The happiness to which the main characters are finally brought has a peculiar quality. There is communicated, somehow, more than the mere fact of their happiness; subtle undercurrents of emotion in unforgettable

29. Neilson and Hill, op. cit., p. 426.

passages convey a special glow. [30]

Concluding, Neilson and Hill write:

> By itself Pericles would be a most untrustworthy witness with reference to Shakespeare's development, but regarded in conjunction with his last plays, it seems to foretell the new directions in which he was soon unmistakably to move. [31]

30. Neilson and Hill, op. cit., p. 428.

31. Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

One patent fact emerges from the foregoing pages: Shakespearian scholars have come to no general agreement relative to the reason, or reasons, why Shakespeare changed from the writing of tragedies to that of dramatic romances.

It would appear that Dowden's "Theory of Moods", taken in its most strict sense, is no longer popular. Yet, as we have seen, a succession of very distinguished scholars, all through this half-century, have sought the reason for Shakespeare's change in his personal history, especially in his emotional and spiritual history. The difficulty with this theory is that it rests almost entirely upon inferences, and inferences are not necessarily facts.

As will have been noted, those scholars who hold that in writing his last plays Shakespeare was responding to altered demands of the Elizabethan audience, generally hold also that Shakespeare wrote more or less in imitation of Beaumont and Fletcher who had already met these demands. This list of scholars is long and impressive. But the

fact remains that Pericles, Philaster, and Cymbeline cannot be dated with certainty, and until they can, it is impossible to be sure of the influence and the influenced.

It appears also that present-day scholars make much more of Pericles than Thorndike did at the turn of the century. There are those even who hold that Philaster antedated and influenced Cymbeline and yet admit that Pericles, which apparently preceded Philaster, contains materials later developed not only by Shakespeare but also by Beaumont and Fletcher. It occurs to the present writer that a line of scholarly thought which could be profitably pursued is the reciprocal relations, and influence, of these playwrights.

Another anti-Thorndike point of view, put forward by Gayley and Wendell more than thirty years ago, and still held by such respected scholars as Parrott and Neilson, is to minimize the so-called differences between Shakespeare's last plays and his earlier dramas. These men have shown that nearly every dramatic device used in these last plays was employed by Shakespeare in some one or other of his previous plays.

It is the present writer's conclusion -- for what it is worth -- that Shakespeare's change from tragedy to

dramatic romance may well be in part the result of some change of mood. It is more plausible, however, to see in this change a desire to respond to the popular demand of the time. As to the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher, it would seem that this has been overemphasized. Shakespeare was not above borrowing ideas, especially from his fellow-dramatists of the King's Company, but a consideration of his previous plays forces one to think that such borrowing could not have been very liberal.

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EXCERPT from the GRADUATE BULLETIN, 1935 - 1937

Page Nine

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