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Shakespeare the Escape Artist: Sourcing the East in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

by Suzanne Tartamella

This essay argues that William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre constitutes a genealogical journey outside the periphery of the West. While scholars tend to under-value the play's geographic specificity, interpreting Pericles in the context of Western Christian culture, I discuss the play's commitment to representing an authentic Eastern geography and what that commitment very well implies. In mapping a recognizably Eastern Mediterranean space, Pericles lays the groundwork for recreating a supra-rational experience of the sacred consistent with a set of beliefs that developed beyond the borders of Rome. Indeed, linguistic excavation indicates that the source for Pericles, the tale of Apollonius, has Greek roots that position it partly as an Eastern Christian text. This is because the story not only originated in Asia Minor, but it likely passed into Latin through a Byzantine epitome, blending Eastern Christian attributes into its pagan narrative. With Pericles, Shakespeare nurtures some of these attributes, staging them for the first time since the story's inception. Although Shakespeare and his contemporaries had limited contact with the Greek Christian world, they would have been exposed to its culture and theology in humanist translations of Greek patristic writings, in travel narratives, even in Protestant polemical texts (such as John Foxe's Acts and Monuments). These channels of exposure, together with the Eastern rootedness of the source itself, coalesce in Pericles, Shakespeare's first experiment with tragicomic romance.

FIRST performed on the Jacobean stage around 1607, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* embodies a genealogical search for birthright on multiple levels—esthetic, metaphysical, geographic, and even authorial. Despite the play's contribution to William Shakespeare's literary development and its incredible popularity, John Heminges and Henry

Condell excluded it from the 1623 folio, perhaps because they felt it was an overtly collaborative enterprise, a Shakespearean half-blood.¹ Today most scholars concede that the minor playwright George Wilkins penned the first nine scenes and Shakespeare the last thirteen.² Yet some readers have identified Shakespeare's hand in certain dialogue and narrative details from the early part of the play.³ A few might even follow F. David Hoeniger in crediting Shakespeare with full authorial jurisdiction, insisting that insofar as "[t]he romances recreate old tales," the playwright "decided as he set out that it was desirable to begin by imitating the very manner of early storytellers and plays and even . . . their lack of sophistication and crudity of devices and writing."⁴ Hoeniger's argument may fail to persuade most readers, but it underscores the fact that Shakespeare's engagement with the centuries-old story of Apollonius of Tyre places him squarely within the source's rich and partly inscrutable history. Ultimately, this engagement carries him into the distant past and outside the boundaries of Europe.

Indeed, to study *Pericles* in context is to propel ourselves backward in time and outward in space, coursing beyond Wilkins's literary efforts to Laurence Twine's prose version of the Apollonius story, *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* (1576), and John Gower's poetic adaptation in his *Confessio Amantis* (ca. 1400). Both Twine and Gower rely heavily on the *Gesta Romanorum*, a fourteenth-century collection of Latin tales mined by several major medieval writers. This "pan-European narrative," however, is far older than that and not exclusively Western.⁵ Although the first extant version appeared in Europe around the fifth century, scholars have also shown that the details and colloquial expressions from the Latin story can be dated to second-century Asia Minor, which

¹ Although *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* (among other Shakespeare plays) are likely collaborative projects, perhaps *Pericles* tipped the scale (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 1165–69 and 1542–46).

² The definitive authorship study is MacDonald P. Jackson's *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³ Roger Warren, ed., *A Reconstructed Text of Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129.

⁴ Hoeniger, "Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33 (1982): 479.

⁵ Although Peter Holland observes that "it is the earliest known English romance and is almost certainly the only fictional narrative to survive in Old, Middle, and Modern English versions," he also acknowledges its status as a "genuinely pan-European narrative" with an even longer history ("Coasting in the Mediterranean: The Journeyings of *Pericles*," *Angles on the English-Speaking World* 5 [2005]: 17).

saw a flourishing of Hellenistic romance.⁶ If G. A. A. Kortekaas is right in claiming that “underneath the Latin form a Greek narrative lies hidden,” that missing Greek source came on the scene during the very beginnings of Christianity and on the edges of the Eastern world.⁷

Despite Ben Jonson’s famously dismissive remark about *Pericles* as a “mouldy tale,” the Apollonius story’s persistence across centuries, cultures, and languages testifies to its strange appeal.⁸ Shakespeare’s version helped sustain the story after the Renaissance, with *Pericles* claiming the position of his first play performed during the Restoration.⁹ After temporarily falling out of favor, *Pericles* has, since the twentieth century, been recognized as a “stageworthy play.”¹⁰ The source of the play’s stage power has as much to do with its geographic setting and culture as with its remarkable resolution. Beyond a story of adventure and reunion, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*—Shakespeare’s first tragicomic romance and his only title with a non-European place-name—dramatizes a hereditary journey outside the boundaries of the West. Although scholars have not ignored the play’s Eastern Mediterranean geography, they tend to undervalue it, reading the ostensibly secular work in the context of Western Christian culture. This essay will take on these contested areas in *Pericles* criticism. Without insisting on a particular religious position or romanticizing Shakespeare’s personal history, I argue that if *King Lear* plumbs the depths of metaphysical discord and doubt—taking us into the heart of England’s mythical past—with *Pericles*, Shakespeare found an opportunity to map an escape route out of Europe. In the process, he uncovered what scholars have yet to recognize in this play: an Eastern Christian aesthetic nestled within a pagan exterior.¹¹

⁶ See, for example, B. P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 736–37.

⁷ Kortekaas, ed., *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre: A Study of Its Greek Origin and an Edition of the Two Oldest Latin Recensions* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 16.

⁸ Jonson, “Ode to Himself,” in *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 283.

⁹ Warren, ed., *A Reconstructed Text of Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, 2.

¹⁰ Ibid. A glowing write-up of a 2014 adaptation by New York City’s Mobile Shakespeare Unit suggests that the performance could very well redeem one radio personality’s disenchanting experience with a production of *King Lear* (Alexis Soloski, “Intrigue in the Middle East, This Time From Shakespeare: Shakespeare’s ‘Pericles, Prince of Tyre’ at the Public Theater,” *New York Times*, 24 November 2014).

¹¹ Scholars, moreover, have not yet explored the Eastern Christian dimension in any of Shakespeare’s works.

MAPPING THE EAST

In no other play, except, perhaps, *Antony and Cleopatra*, does Shakespeare so flamboyantly violate the Aristotelian unity of place. During his adventures, Pericles travels to six locations in the Eastern Mediterranean, from Antioch to Ephesus; and, insofar as the play's major catastrophe—the ostensible death of Pericles's wife, Thaisa—occurs at sea, one could claim the ship itself as a seventh place located somewhere off the map. Despite Shakespeare's decision to stage this story for the first time since its inception, scholars dispute the importance of these cities in understanding the play. While some presume an ill-defined landscape with unspecified locales, others see in the play a "consistently developed" setting of the pre-Roman Hellenized Eastern Mediterranean.¹² A close look at the play shows a commitment to representing, to the best of its ability, an authentic Eastern geography. More than that, it asks us to retain that geographic information as we travel through the narrative with its titular hero. Thus, the play establishes a spatial and historical foundation that one cannot ignore when considering Christian allusions and undertones that scholars have hitherto marked, sometimes unwittingly, as exclusively *Western*.

Flanking Pericles's adventures at sea are his life-changing encounter with the incestuous king at Antioch (in present-day Turkey) and his

¹² Linda McJannet, "Genre and Geography: The Eastern Mediterranean in *Pericles* and *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), 86–106, esp. 94. For scholars representing the first camp, see John Gillies, "Place and Space in Three Late Plays," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, vol. 4, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 176; and Lisa Hopkins, "'The Shores of My Mortality': Pericles' Greece of the Mind," in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 228. Following McJannet, Constance C. Relihan believes that the locations in *Pericles* are not to be taken as "mere abstractions"; she argues that the play deliberately constructs a "liminal realm" through its "series of specifically non-European locations" ("Liminal Geography: *Pericles* and the Politics of Place," *Philological Quarterly* 71 [1992]: 281 and 293). Vassiliki Markidou has recently built on Relihan's essay in particular, reading *Pericles* as a "palimpsestic text which alludes . . . to the glory of ancient Greece" and its "decay and subsequent fall . . . to the Ottomans" ("To take our imagination / From bourn to bourn, region to region': The Politics of Greek Topographies in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*," in *Shakespeare and Greece*, ed. Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou [London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2017], 171). She goes on to argue that that play "constitutes a spatial, as well temporal palimpsest, which not only offered entertainment to its early modern English spectators—interested as they were in learning about or imagining remote places and times in an era of unprecedented geographical and mercantile expansion—but also disclosed anxieties about the danger of the Jacobean state's fall from greatness to degeneration and decay" (ibid.).

transcendent reunions with his daughter and wife at Mytilene and Ephesus. In the opening speech of the play, the internal narrator and chorus, John Gower, introduces Antioch as “[t]he fairest in all Syria,” yet infected with sexual perversion that time has made a property of easiness.¹³ Pericles naively journeys there in quest of a princess whose beauty he compares to a “book of praises” capable of banishing all “[s]orrow” and “wrath” (1.1.16–19). Celebrating everything from her excellent virtues and noble thoughts to her springtime appearance, the prince mouths the sort of Petrarchan platitudes that reflect his miscalculation of the region’s dangers and his misunderstanding of the prize he expects to gain. Pericles fancies himself a “bold champion” (62), one who can gaze unflinchingly into death’s gaping maw and respond with sarcasm: “Antiochus, I thank thee, who hath taught / My frail mortality to know itself” (42–43). But the riddle changes everything, and the prince has underestimated the weight of those words. Antioch, Pericles soon discovers, exemplifies not only systemic evil but also a city whose toxins are airborne, poisoning him for his critical acumen, his awakened awareness. Without even sampling the “golden fruit,” the prince is condemned for gazing knowingly upon a *postlapsarian* Edenic tree (29).¹⁴ It is perhaps fitting that Antioch appears only in the first scene of the play, for the memory of it haunts him throughout the work and sets the stage for his nearly tragic fall. The disaster he unearths there compels him to “go travel for a while,” and for more than a decade, he journeys around the Eastern Mediterranean (1.2.104).

The other locations in the play seem more deliberately multifaceted, more dependent on variable perspectives and thus more realistic than the one-dimensional fairy nightmare dramatized at Antioch. This greater degree of geographic attentiveness derives in part from the story’s episodic structure. Staging the rest of the cities from multiple points of view, Shakespeare and Wilkins delineate, for example, a better sense of Tyre (present-day Lebanon) across a few key scenes—the first with Pericles, the self-declared “true prince” (1.2.122), preparing to leave his kingdom after contemplating the “thousand doubts” of violent retribution from Antioch (95). In the next scene, Antiochus’s hired assassin, Thaliart, appears on its shores, directing the audience’s attention

¹³ Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: Arden, 2004), 1.0.19. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text by act, scene, and line.

¹⁴ See, for example, Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 167–69.

to the contrast with his native Antioch and developing our imaginative understanding of Tyre's geographic character: "So this," he sweepingly reflects, "is Tyre, and this the court. Here must I kill King Pericles" (1.3.1–2). Tarsus, too (present-day Turkey), achieves additional dimensionality as the play progresses. In our first glimpse, we see a city stricken with famine and lamenting the loss of "riches" that had formerly "strew[n] herself even in her streets" (1.4.23). Later, Pericles's daughter Marina is nurtured and then almost destroyed in this city. Similarly, at Mytilene (on Lesbos), we witness Marina's forced prostitution, her capability in morally regenerating prurient customers, and then her miraculous reunion with her father. A place characterized by brothel culture and political hypocrisy, Mytilene is also where Pericles hears the "music of the spheres" (5.1.217).

Reflecting a regional complexity all its own, Ephesus—the historical location (now Turkey) of the ancient temple of Diana and the fifth-century Ecumenical Council that officially declared the Virgin Mary the *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer"—not only offers Thaisa sanctuary to preserve her chastity but also represents the conjugal reunion of husband and wife: "You shall do well," Pericles says, "That on the touching of her lips I may / Melt and no more be seen. O, come, be buried / A second time within these arms" (5.3.41–44). Finally, although scholars continue to debate whether Renaissance audiences would have located the play's Pentapolis in North Africa, Greece, or somewhere else along the Black or Mediterranean Seas, it is just as vital to the plot in that it represents Thaisa's past, as well as her future home with Pericles—and just as suggestively Eastern as the other cities in the play.¹⁵ Our initial view of this location comes from the perspective of three fishermen, who offer social commentary on the state of their country. In contrast to strife and conflict elsewhere, Pentapolis houses "good [King] Simonides," known for "his peaceable reign and good government" (2.1.97–99). Thus, the play uses these fishermen to shape our understanding of the court—even before we get there.

In addition to sharpening our perception of these Eastern cities through repeated visits, characters are especially painstaking in announcing their current location or the places they intend to travel. This suggests an attempt to preserve some degree of geographical authenticity, to safeguard the mind's-eye map drawn for its audience.

¹⁵ The Oxford edition of *Pericles* includes a map of the Mediterranean that places Pentapolis in North Africa, but McJannet makes a "case for [Ovidian] Tomi, on the Black Sea south of the Danube" ("Genre and Geography," 91).

Gower—"who stand[s] i'th' gaps to teach" the "stages" of the "story" (4.4.8–9)—reinforces this objective. His constant references not only to the specific locations in these "stages" but also to the imagination required of the audience to insert themselves into the scenes help to preserve the work's cartographic integrity as well. Indeed, Gower at times speaks as if standing next to an actual map: "Imagine Pericles arrived at Tyre, / Welcomed and settled to his own desire. / His woeful queen we leave at Ephesus, / Unto Diana there's a votaress. / Now to Marina bend your mind, / Whom our fast-growing scene must find / At Tarsus" (4.0.1–7).¹⁶ Later in the play, after Marina is sold to a brothel, Gower transports us back to her story, saying, "Patience then, / And think you now are all in Mytilene" (4.4.50–51). At the beginning of this speech, he offers an apologetic defense of his single (English) language, despite the distinct and distant cultures he seeks to illumine: "By you being pardoned, we commit no crime / To use one language in each several clime / Where our scenes seem to live" (5–7). Shakespeare seems committed to drawing essential differences between these locations. Mytilene is not Tarsus, and Tarsus is not Tyre.

Gower's unique authorial voice in *Pericles* is fitting given its collaborative history and the intentionally medieval flavor infused throughout a work about antiquity.¹⁷ Yet Gower ultimately remains subordinate to Shakespeare, who uses him as a lens through which to view not just the ancient world but also the Eastern one.¹⁸ Linda McJannet partly corroborates this point about geographic origin, arguing that the play "seem[s] to have absorbed from [its] sources the Greek notion of a decentralized, cosmopolitan empire of the world, rather than the Italo-centric image of

¹⁶ Cyrus Mulready sees in this passage not a nebulous conglomerate but rather "a proliferation in geography" that invites us to "imagine the stage containing many transported scenes and places" (*Romance on the Early Modern Stage: English Expansion Before and After Shakespeare* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 152).

¹⁷ See Bart van Es, "Late Shakespeare and the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper, and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 37–51. Noting the play's "magnified ersatz medievalism," van Es also asserts that "[i]n no Shakespearean play besides *Pericles* do we find such a conspicuous and separate authorial presence" (47 and 49). See also Hoeniger, "Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*"; Richard Hillman, "Shakespeare's Gower and Gower's Shakespeare: The Larger Debt of *Pericles*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36 (1985): 427–37; and Edward Gieskes, "'Chaucer (of all admired) the story gives': Shakespeare, Medieval Narrative, and Generic Innovation," *Renaissance Papers* (2009): 85–109.

¹⁸ Holland argues that "*Pericles* itself is a journey across the mappings of narrative represented by the Apollonius story, not only the *Historia Apollonii* itself but all its manifestations" ("Coasting in the Mediterranean," 25). Accounting for "all its manifestations" also means attending to the story's roots in the East.

empire cherished by the Romans"; Constance C. Relihan goes further, exploring early modern sources "exclud[ing] Greece from the Christian West" due to its association with the Turks.¹⁹ "Greece," after all, is incredibly multifaceted. On the one hand, it is the birthplace of Western philosophy. On the other hand, it possessed during the classical era a cultural and geographic reach extending eastward into Asia Minor. In terms of religious culture, Greece has always maintained some degree of distinction from the Christian West, a reality intensified after the Great Schism in 1054 and then the fall of Constantinople (and consequently the Byzantine Empire) in 1453.²⁰ One might wonder, of course, how this can all be relevant to a dramatist notorious for his "small Latin, and less Greek."²¹ Nevertheless, even if Shakespeare's direct experience with the Greek world was limited, he possessed, as A. D. Nuttall puts it, a "faculty for driving through the available un-Greek transmitting text to whatever lay on the other side."²² Just as the medieval Gower becomes a catalyst for exploring the antique past, so the Latinized Greek story about Apollonius of Tyre becomes a gateway into the East, which for Shakespeare and his contemporaries was more mystical and mysterious than their own world.

WO/ANDERING ABOUT THE EAST

Staging the story's constellation of Eastern Mediterranean cities helps to sharpen our view of the region's oriental inscrutability, marked by its wild and strange wonders.²³ Indeed, *strange* is one of the operative

¹⁹ McJannet, "Genre and Geography," 100; and Relihan, "Liminal Geography," 283–84.

²⁰ See, for example, Findlay and Markidou, introduction to *Shakespeare and Greece*, ed. Findlay and Marikdou, 1–44.

²¹ Jonson, "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr William Shakespeare: And What He Hath Left Us," in *The Complete Poems*, ed. Parfitt, 264.

²² Nuttall, "Action at a Distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks," in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 214. For a short article defending Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek geography, see Clifford J. Ronan, "An Ovidian 'Farthest Greece' in *Errors, Titus, and Pericles*," *Discoveries: South-Central Renaissance Conference News and Notes* 19.1 (2002): 3–4. See also Stuart Gillespie, "Shakespeare and Greek Romance: 'Like an old tale still,'" in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Martindale and Taylor, 225–37. Gillespie considers that "the late Shakespeare may have profited from the [Greek] romances more directly and more individualistically" (231).

²³ See Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, *Early Modern Drama and the Eastern European Elsewhere: Representations of Liminal Locality in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009). As Matei-Chesnoiu remarks, Renaissance "constructions of Eastern European and eastern Mediterranean cultures saw them as liminal locations, outside the margins of the civilized world" (166). This parallels the work of

words when it comes to defining Renaissance notions of *wonder*, which ranged from admiration to revulsion, ecstatic joy to fearful trepidation, mobilizing thoughtfulness to crippling doubt. Depending on the context, then, the experience of wonder may slide between its emotional and epistemological dimensions. Cornelis Verhoeven's description of wonder as "bewilderment," or a "wandering in the wilderness," aptly captures the concept's vacillation between these polarities.²⁴ In the West, of course, the epistemological polarity has typically been given great weight. Scholarly explorations of wonder in Shakespeare's tragicomic romances are no exception, with much criticism informed (like Stephen Greenblatt's well-known *Marvelous Possessions*) by Western intellectual history.²⁵ Peter G. Platt, for example, theorizes wonder in terms of early modern developments in natural history, theology, and aestheticism, exploring the term's relationship with its counterpart, reason. Platt identifies two branches of wonder within intellectual history, one that perceives its declining with increased knowledge and another that insists it can "diminish reason."²⁶ In either case, however, Platt sees wonder as operating within an epistemological framework and conceptualizes its relationship with reason along a horizontal axis. Maintaining that wonder in Shakespeare's tragicomedies (including *Pericles*) is characterized by "intellectual and epistemological destabilization," Platt, in other words, suggests it is always in a tug-of-war with reason—with wonder defining and defined by the very concept against which it struggles.²⁷ In contrast, I want to invoke a vertical hermeneutic when I argue that *Pericles* attempts to transcend epistemological concerns altogether. Here wonder is not, as Aristotle and Plato would have it, a prelude to knowledge or, as Greenblatt would assert, a rapacious desire to study and colonize.²⁸ Instead of the acquisition of knowledge and more than

Stephen Greenblatt, who describes the Renaissance perception of New World *others* as untamed marvels that can "be touched, cataloged, inventoried, possessed" (*Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 22).

²⁴ Verhoeven, *The Philosophy of Wonder*, trans. Mary Foran (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 53.

²⁵ See Peter G. Platt, *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvelous* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); T. G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996); and Adam Max Cohen, *Wonder in Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²⁶ Platt, *Reason Diminished*, 1–18.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁸ See Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Rockville, MD: Serenity Publishers, 2009), 155d; and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, ed. Renford Bambrough, trans. J. L. Creed and A. E. Wardman (New York: Signet, 2003), 1.2.982b.

even a “diminish[ed] reason,” the play imparts a heightened awareness of mystery—a *suprarational* revelation of the Eastern Christian sacred consistent with its mapping of a non-Western geographic space.

In suggesting that wonder takes on a *suprarational* character in *Pericles*, I am deliberately distinguishing *suprarational* from *irrational*, with the Latin prefix *supra-* “denoting a thing which is situated over, above, [or] higher than . . . another.”²⁹ Reason, in other words, is not dismissed or distorted but rather comparatively subjugated en route to the play’s wonder-filled denouement. Verhoeven’s definition of wonder as “bewilderment” appropriately characterizes Pericles’s harrowing adventures leading him away from worldly uncertainty to divine mystery. The catalyst for this shift is what Platt calls an “epistemological catastrophe” at Antioch when Pericles thinks he can gain a prize for his heroic cleverness.³⁰ Subsequently running for his life and buffeted about by “Fortune,” Pericles “finds himself in a sequence of *wildernesses*,” Simon Palfrey argues, and “remains . . . bereft of confident clarities.”³¹ These lapses in clarity do not mar but rather enhance the play’s ultimate celebration of wonder in its most positive sense, its affirmation that goodness can be restored, however inexplicably this is accomplished.³²

Howard Felperin sees something of this aesthetic tendency established early in the play, observing that Gower’s opening speech “tell[s] us that the story we are about to witness will be a timeless parable for our spiritual enlightenment” and “that to learn from it we must unlearn” our complex, relentlessly rational, “sophisticated notions of dramatic story-telling.”³³ Progressing toward what Felperin calls “one of the most spiritualized representations of earthly bliss in literature,” *Pericles*’s very structure reflects this *suprarational* aesthetic.³⁴ Its titular hero, the play’s center, is constantly on the move, “driven before the winds” of weather and Fortune and gliding across waters that have long

²⁹ S.v. “supra-, prefix,” *OED Online*, June 2017, Oxford University Press.

³⁰ Platt, *Reason Diminished*, 133.

³¹ Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 60 and 63, emphasis added.

³² Contrasting Palfrey’s emphasis on the play’s skeptically pessimistic qualities, Kenneth J. Semon defends its optimistic core, seeing “an order beyond reason” (“*Pericles: An Order Beyond Reason*,” *Essays in Literature* 1 [1974]: 17–27). See also Semon, “Fantasy and Wonder in Shakespeare’s Last Plays,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25 (1974): 89–102.

³³ Felperin, “Shakespeare’s Miracle Play,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18 (1967): 366. Felperin thus implies that the play gains something special in exploring narrative techniques that are not “sophisticated,” as in “adulterated” or “deprived . . . of primitive simplicity” (s.v. “sophisticated, adj.,” *OED Online*, September 2016, Oxford University Press).

³⁴ Felperin, “Shakespeare’s Miracle Play,” 372.

since yielded a stable, reflective clarity (5.0.14). Only occasionally does he (or can he) articulate short-term objectives; never can he clarify long-term goals. A reader searching for a *reason*—a rational cause—for how the play maps the Eastern Mediterranean will typically emerge like Pericles on the shores of Pentapolis, admitting, “What [or how] I have been I have forgot to know” (2.1.69). With only a couple of exceptions (for example, when Pericles decides to return to Tarsus with the baby Marina), the prince and his family land in places that transcend reason but that somehow become necessary for their miraculous reunions in the denouement.

Subjugating the properties of knowing, *Pericles* is a profoundly emotional play. Although reason dictates that solving the riddle at Antioch endangers his life, fear and anxiety propel Pericles forward into “unknown travels” (1.3.34) whereby the rationale behind his first stop, Tarsus, remains a mystery (1.2.113–15). Pericles’s departure from Tyre establishes a precedent for inexplicable, often emotionally directed wandering for the rest of the play. Helping to inculcate this suprarational aesthetic is Gower himself, whose structured report of events floods us with words even as it evacuates sound from the main action. Nestled within his narrative are several dumb shows that elevate certain details to the level of wordless action, of emotionally rich symbolic gesture. We do not hear, for example, Pericles suffer through his first shipwreck when he is thrown ashore at Pentapolis (2.0.27–38), or grieve after discovering Marina’s tomb (4.4.23–43). Somehow those moments are more poignant precisely because of this fact. Pericles’s decision not to speak at all after this discovery is consistent with the play’s aesthetic character. Even though Marina helps restore her father to language, that restoration merely brings him around again to a transcendent, wordless joy that rings in his ears as a dream.

Indeed, the restoration scenes at the conclusion of *Pericles* are the central grounds for its popularity, its primary source of wonder, and its most prominent demonstration of the suprarational aesthetic. The power of these final scenes lies in the way they locate the experience of the sacred beyond the realm of human reason. Here the play asks us to accept “inscrutable forces” but also to dream of miracle—to live with the possibility that people long gone can return to us.³⁵ That dream is half realized in the father-daughter reunion at Mytilene, which Shakespeare stages as an awakening of the senses. The scene begins with

³⁵ Semon, “*Pericles: An Order Beyond Reason*,” 26.

Marina attempting to revive the travelling stranger with “sweet harmony” (5.1.37). Her first sally unsuccessful, the audience must sit expectantly, nervously, anxiously, during a protracted meeting they nonetheless know will turn out well. After all, Pericles’s curiosity is soon piqued by Marina’s physical appearance, which reminds him of Thaisa: “My queen’s square brows, / Her stature to an inch, as wand-like straight, / As silver-voiced, her eyes as jewel-like / And cased as richly, in pace another Juno” (99–102). This visual association inspires Pericles to ask probing questions about Marina’s past and parentage; like a child, he wants Marina to “[t]ell thy story” (125). Instead, though, of moving toward a rationalized clarity, Pericles courses further into fantasy, swept along on the waves of reverie. “This is the rarest dream,” he muses, “that e’er dull sleep / Did mock sad fools withal” (152–53).

Rewarded (unlike Lear) for learning to see things feelingly, Pericles’s reunion with Marina is marked by extremes of emotion, including a profusion of weeping that reflects both the tempests (within and without) he has endured and the cleansing joy he finally experiences in the wake of something impossible (5.1.167–74). Even though Pericles eventually accepts and “bless[es]” (202) Marina as his daughter, however, this recognition partly transports him away from earthly realities to a kind of isolated, and isolating, transcendence. Alone in his ability to hear the “music of the spheres” (217), Pericles is the last character on stage when the goddess Diana appears to command him to journey to Ephesus, where he reunites with his wife. Pericles finally emerges from a torturous (and tortuous) wilderness but remains, in a different way, bewildered and stupefied—as does the audience. By the time Pericles meets Thaisa two scenes later, he is so emotionally overcome that he cries out, “No more, you gods!” and hopes that “on the touching of her [Thaisa’s] lips,” he may “[m]elt and no more be seen” (5.3.40–43). Pericles’s last address in the play is, significantly, to Thaisa’s mystical healer Lord Cerimon, the priestly Ephesian from whom he wishes “[t]o hear the rest untold” (5.3.85). We might interpret this line two ways: Pericles wants to listen to Cerimon tell of Thaisa’s recovery and life as a votaress; or the prince wants to preserve “this great miracle” (5.3.59) by leaving the rest of it *untold*. In either instance, though, Pericles is preparing to become a wordless spectator, a dumbstruck wandering wonderer.

Many of these characteristics have led scholars to argue that even though *Pericles* is technically a secular story centered on a pre-Christian, pagan prince, one can easily read the play in terms of the Christian West. Given how deeply entrenched *Pericles*’s source is in pre-Reformation

European literature, scholars have not surprisingly noted the play's Catholic elements: its Marian figures, its allusions to religious orders, its attentiveness to sacred ritual, and its connection to medieval religious drama (especially the miracle plays), chivalric romances, and hagiographic writings.³⁶ As Helen Cooper observes, *Pericles* "shows Shakespeare's most comprehensive engagement with the medieval world" and, in the West, the medieval world was predominantly Catholic.³⁷ So, too, were Wilkins and, many scholars argue, Shakespeare himself.³⁸ Perhaps Renaissance audiences were aware of this possibility, for the play also inspired a Jesuit following and appealed to recusant Catholics just after it was first staged.³⁹

This does not mean, however, that *Pericles* necessarily constitutes Catholic polemic. Arguing that "more than one kind of theology circulates throughout the play," Richard Finkelstein explores issues vital to the fledgling Protestant faith, including the nature of grace, the limits of human agency, the primacy of faith over works, and the complicated relationship between "visual images" and "corrupt physicality."⁴⁰ Finkelstein roots his Protestant reading in a study of Paul's epistles, reminding us that "[t]he many 'exotic' locales of *Pericles* are almost all associated with Paul," who was "[b]orn in Tarsus," briefly preached in Antioch, spread the gospel in Tyre, and "famously travelled to Ephesus," which inspired his great epistle about Christ and the Church.⁴¹ Maurice Hunt has also explored the relationship between the voyages of Paul

³⁶ See Felperin, "Shakespeare's Miracle Play," 366; Caroline Bicks, "Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women," in Skeele, ed., *Pericles: Critical Essays*, 205–27; F. Elizabeth Hart, "'Great is Diana' of Shakespeare's Ephesus," *SEL* 43 (2003): 347–74; Richard Paul Knowles, "'The More Delay'd, Delighted': Theophanies in the Last Plays," *Shakespeare Studies* 15 (1982): 269–80; Peter Womack, "Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.1 (1999): 169–87; and Joanne M. Rochester, "Space and Staging in the Digby *Mary Magdalen* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*," *Early Theatre* 13.2 (2010): 43–62.

³⁷ Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden, 2013), 196.

³⁸ For a brief comment on Wilkins, see Sonja Fielitz, "Learned Pate and Golden Fool: A Jesuit Source for *Timon of Athens*," in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 189.

³⁹ According to Richard Wilson, "In 1610, *King Lear* would be staged along with *Pericles*, in a season of miracle plays toured through the Yorkshire Dales by a troupe of recusant actors" (*Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion, and Resistance* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004], 54–55). See also Womack, "Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories," 180–81; John L. Murphy, *Darkness and Devils: Exorcism and "King Lear"* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), 93–118; and Fielitz, "Learned Pate and Golden Fool," 189.

⁴⁰ Finkelstein, "*Pericles*, Paul, and Protestantism," *Comparative Drama* 44 (2010): 101 and 121.

⁴¹ Finkelstein, "*Pericles*, Paul, and Protestantism," 103.

and Pericles, arguing (like Finkelstein) for a “religious syncretism” in the play, not just between Protestantism and Catholicism but also between primitive Christianity and the pagan faiths dotting the Eastern Mediterranean.⁴² Calling *Pericles* “Shakespeare’s most liminal classical play,” Hunt contends that the Acts of the Apostles forms a vital “inter-text” reinforced by the play’s geographic commonalities and Christian allusions, the various instances of holy and moralistic preaching,⁴³ and the appearance of fishermen in act 2—fishermen who recall not the pre-Christian Hellenistic world but rather “the Apostolic first century.”⁴⁴

Largely missed in current scholarship, though, is the fact that the play’s probable Greek roots position it, at least in part, as an *Eastern Christian* text. In her study of the Apollonius story and its origins, Elizabeth Archibald finds persuasive Kortekaas’s theory that the missing “Greek original [was] composed in Syria in the late second or early third century A.D., which was the basis for the Latin version composed in central Italy in the late fifth or early sixth century.”⁴⁵ Syria, including the Syriac language, was central to the development of Eastern Christianity.⁴⁶ Although Kortekaas has more recently suggested an origin in Asia Minor generally instead of Syria specifically, his point remains: the Apollonius story is originally Eastern, not Western.⁴⁷ Even more notably, Kortekaas argues that the missing original was “filtered [into Latin] through a Greek Christian epitome,” also likely composed in Asia Minor.⁴⁸ “Probably this *epitome*,” he contends, “was written in circles which stood in close contact with ecclesiastical circles” during the first part of the Byzantine Empire.⁴⁹

Following on the heels of this hypothesized Greek epitome is the

⁴² Hunt, “Syncretistic Religion in Shakespeare’s Late Romances,” *South Central Review* 28.2 (2011): 57–79. See also Brian Walsh, “‘A Priestly Farewell’: Gower’s Tomb and Religious Change in *Pericles*,” *Religion and Literature* 45.3 (2013): 81–113. Focusing on the “Protestant-Catholic dialectic” in *Pericles*, Walsh follows in the footsteps of Finkelstein and Hunt, arguing that the play stages “an atmosphere of openness to multiple forms of spiritual comfort” (82 and 104).

⁴³ Hunt, “Shakespeare’s *Pericles* and the Acts of the Apostles,” *Christianity and Literature* 49 (2000): 296.

⁴⁴ Hunt, “Syncretistic Religion,” 65. For further discussion, see his essay, “A New Taxonomy of Shakespeare’s Pagan Plays,” *Religion and Literature* 43.1 (2011): 29–53.

⁴⁵ Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 7. Archibald is citing G. A. A. Kortekaas, ed., *Apollonii Regis Tyri* (Netherlands: Groningen, 1984), 97–125.

⁴⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 249–50.

⁴⁷ Kortekaas, ed., *The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre*, 57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 51 and 51n42.

fifth- or sixth-century Latin version, in which references to a monotheistic God and Christian prayer, allusions to the Bible, the appearance of a fear-dispelling angel, and a minor subplot involving (apostolic) fishermen all allow us to speculate that these elements may have preceded the story's adoption by the West and that they stem from an Eastern Christian root.⁵⁰ At the very least, we can say that as European writers continued to rework the Christian elements of the Apollonius tale, they had to contend with an Eastern geographic region and foundational narrative that had the power to circumscribe the process—rendering many Christian elements incorporated or emphasized within the story *Eastern* Christian partly by virtue of its geographic location. The recent attention, furthermore, to the link between *Pericles* and the Acts of the Apostles also reinforces the story's Eastern Christian dimension, insofar as churches outside Europe have adhered closely to the practices of Apostolic Christianity (*itself* technically Eastern).⁵¹ Thus, the very act of engaging with the Apollonius narrative propels participants like Shakespeare, willingly or not, into that ancient Eastern world, allowing them to experience that culture as the West has long imagined it: mystical, mystifying, and suprarational.

Indeed, a closer look at Eastern Christianity substantiates this view. Distinct from the general strains of “Christian anti-rationalism” that developed in the West alongside scholasticism,⁵² suprarationalism defines in a more holistic way the theological trajectory of the whole of Orthodoxy. Even to this day it differentiates itself from the West by its insistence that *reason* must be put in its place if one wishes to achieve religious transcendence. For Eastern Christians, proximity to God stimulates what James R. Payton, Jr., describes as the suprarational experience of “divine incomprehensibility.”⁵³ The closer one approaches God, in other words, the less necessary (and less available) is reason in defining the wonder perceived. Payton explains that whereas “Western confidence in the ability of the Christian mind to explain truth and account for the ways of God with humanity came to recognize almost no bounds,” the

⁵⁰ For one translation of the Latin story, see Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, 109–79.

⁵¹ See Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008). According to Jenkins, the “Christian East . . . genuinely did live in a world that had a recognizable continuity from the earliest church, a pattern of organic development in terms of social and economic arrangements, of language, culture, and geography” (26).

⁵² See, for example, William M. Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 121.

⁵³ Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 84.

religion took a different shape outside of Europe: “distrust in the capacities of mere human reason to understand the most profound truth, an attitude that had developed during the Hellenistic period, found a welcome home in the attitudes of Eastern Christianity.”⁵⁴ In place of reason, the Eastern branch of the faith has long nurtured both “humility and the *commitment to wonder*.”⁵⁵ Much of this theology was available in the Christian West thanks in part to Renaissance humanists and travel writers, and much of this suprarational aesthetic we see in *Pericles*, from its staging of mystical encounters, its emphasis on wonder as an emotional experience more than an epistemological state, its representation of the hero’s encounter with a divine power, and its perpetuation of cosmic mystery as much as cosmic justice. In the next section, I discuss some of the channels by which Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have learned about the Christian East before examining specifically Orthodox spiritual beliefs appearing within *Pericles*’s Eastern space.

DIVINING THE EAST

Although Eastern Christianity remains to this day a half-forgotten, or at least half-ignored, oddity in the West, early modern Europeans would have encountered references to those strange and unusual Christians in accounts of holy pilgrimages, in medieval and contemporary travel narratives, in humanist translations of Greek patristic writings, and in Protestant polemical texts (like John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*) intent on positioning the newly reformed faith in a continuous line traceable to the primitive church and the early Christian Fathers. One of the prevailing sentiments expressed in early modern meditations on the East is nostalgia—nostalgia for a period preceding the Islamic conquest of Asia Minor and the Ottoman threat to Western Europe. We see this idealized longing in John Mandeville’s enduringly popular *Travels* (ca. 1360), which takes us to some of the same cities staged in *Pericles* when it reminisces about a time when “Christian men used to possess” Ephesus, that “fair city” with a “fine church,” and when it memorializes Tyre, “the port of entry for Syria,” as “once . . . a fine city of Christian men.”⁵⁶ Even if early modern Europeans on some level recognized the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30–31.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31, emphasis added.

⁵⁶ Mandeville, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. C. W. R. D. Moseley (New York: Penguin, 1983), 53 and 56.

continued presence of Eastern Christians in Asia Minor, the religion (and its association with Hellenistic culture itself) represented for them a pre-Islamic past.

Bridging the past and present was one of the central tasks of sixteenth-century humanists, whose translations of Greek texts increased European awareness of Eastern Christianity. Harold L. Weatherby is among the small group of literary critics who has worked in this area, arguing for a Greek patristic influence on the decisively Protestant Edmund Spenser. Without making the improbable contention that the author of *The Faerie Queene* was Eastern Orthodox, Weatherby suggests that Spenser drew from Greek Fathers such as Saint John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem in constructing his epic.⁵⁷ As we know, Spenser relied on a countless number of sources in his encyclopedic work and the patristic texts were, according to Weatherby, at his disposal at Pembroke College, Cambridge, thanks to humanists like Desiderius Erasmus. The sixteenth-century translation and transmission of Greek texts serve as useful context for Shakespeare's *Pericles*, which seems to stage, behind the narrating figure of the medieval Gower, the Renaissance humanist presenting the results of his research.

That the Protestant world in particular, though, should take an interest in the Greek Fathers and even in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy may seem theologically incompatible with its purposes, but, as Foxe articulates in *Acts and Monuments*—a work familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries—the “greeke church, hath of long tyme dissented from the Latin Church in many & sondry pointes.”⁵⁸ This fact undoubtedly pleased Protestant polemicists, for even if the Eastern Christian liturgy resembled the Catholic Mass, the point is that Orthodoxy represented what Western reformers were seeking to justify: their break with Rome. Indeed, Foxe at many points in his massive tome refers to the Eastern Church and Greek patristic texts, especially Chrysostom's, to undermine the authority of the pope, to disprove purgatory, to argue against celi-

⁵⁷ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Indeed, “[a]ll the principal Fathers,” he writes, “are to be found in sixteenth-century, Western European editions, some in the original Greek, some in Latin translations, some in both, a few in English” (4–5). Weatherby explains that almost all “[t]hese patristic editions . . . are major scholarly publications from distinguished [printing] houses” and that “[t]he editors were for the most part the major humanists”—humanists like Erasmus (5). He adds that “by 1545 all of the Byzantine service books were in print in the West” (5).

⁵⁸ Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or TAMO (1576 edition), available from <http://www.johnfoxe.org>.

bacy, to criticize worship on non-Sabbath days, and to advocate for services in the vernacular. Foxe even employs the Church Fathers to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation, saying “it falsifieth the sayings of the godly fathers and the Catholike fayth of the C[h]urche.”⁵⁹ Foxe’s motivation in enlisting Greek patristic writers was macrocosmic as well as doctrinally microcosmic: he endeavored not only to redefine martyrdom but also to recover the lost line of Christianity and trace it directly back to the Apostles. The Eastern Church, especially its treasured Fathers, became an attractive source for anyone undertaking that daunting feat.

But even prior to the Reformation, Mandeville in his *Travels* collected and disseminated information about Eastern Christianity to the Christian West. For him, however, it remained more a source of intrigue and wonder, prompting comparison to the Latin Church yet also promulgating unmistakable distinctions. Approaching the Greek religion as a passive tourist, Mandeville meditates on some of the holy sites shared by all Christians before remarking on some of the unusual, even renegade, practices of those worshipping beyond the reach of Rome. This includes even the grooming of Greek Orthodox men, who “say we commit a deadly sin in shaving our beards, for they say that the beard is a symbol of manhood and the gift of God. And they who shave their beards do it only to appear well to the world and to please their wives.”⁶⁰ This description is reminiscent of Pericles, who, after the restoration of his family, declares,

And now this ornament
Makes me look dismal will I clip to form,
And what this fourteen years no razor touched
To grace thy marriage day I’ll beautify.

(5.3.74–77)

The prince’s use of the word *ornament* conveys his new interpretation of a beard that previously held moral significance, and his decision to clip and shape it reflects a motivation to “please.”⁶¹ Narrative touches like these not only reinforce the antique flavor of the narrative but also distinguish Pericles culturally from English Renaissance audiences.

Beyond Eastern aesthetics, though, Mandeville’s *Travels* articulates specific doctrinal differences evident in Eastern Christian theology, in-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Mandeville, *Travels*, 51.

⁶¹ Little has been said about Mandeville’s influence on Shakespeare, but Mulready argues that Mandeville’s *Travels* “inspired English imaginings of foreign places” — imaginings that would include *Pericles* (*Romance on the Early Modern Stage*, 31).

cluding the omission of the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed, the rejection of purgatory, the ordination of married men, and the adherence to a holy patriarch. Emphasizing that the Eastern Church “is not in obedience to the Church of Rome, nor to the Pope,” Mandeville frames the next point as titillating rumor: “And they say that beyond the Greek sea their Patriarch has as much power as our Pope has on his side of it.”⁶² Blending facts with ostensible hearsay, Mandeville shifts between offering clarity about the world outside of Europe and preserving that other world as a “great marvel.”⁶³ If Foxe (along with other Protestant polemicists) endeavored to bring the East to the West, Mandeville’s travel narrative takes readers directly to those Eastern locations, allowing them to leave the comfort of the known to experience the wonder of the unknown. As he suggests, “since the land of Greece is the nearest country that varies and is discordant in faith and writing from our faith,” his description will appeal to those who “desire to hear of unfamiliar things and take pleasure in them.”⁶⁴ This, I contend, is the escapist posture of *Pericles*, a throwback medieval narrative propelling its audiences even further backward into antiquity and across the Mediterranean into a pagan-Christian Eastern world.⁶⁵ The play undertakes this temporal and geographic journey when it uses its three principal characters—Pericles, Marina, and Thaisa—to stage another Orthodox belief that best highlights what I have called the suprarational aesthetic: the concept of *theosis* (deification).

Although basic Christian theology is fairly consistent across the different regions of the world, the Orthodox downplaying of philosophical intellection means a favoring of aesthetic practice, which ensures that

⁶² Mandeville, *Travels*, 50.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁵ Eastern Christianity ultimately possesses a complicated temporal and geographic relationship with Shakespeare’s Renaissance contemporaries, a relationship that *Pericles* demonstrates in its intricate characterizations, plot structure, and setting (see Relihan, “Liminal Geography,” 282–85). For example, in her analysis of Samuel Purchas’s travel book, *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (London, 1625), and its relevance to *Pericles*, Relihan observes a “clear distinction . . . between ancient Greece [including the primitive church] and its modern descendent [now occupied by the Turks]” (285). However, *Pericles* is in a unique position to bridge many of those divides. Not only does it possess, in Relihan’s words, a “liminal [Eastern] geography,” but its Apollonius source is a generic hodgepodge, a blend of folklore, romance, and epic—a “chameleon” narrative “lacking a generic colour of its own” (Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, 91). These characteristics add shading and texture to the Jacobean play’s polymorphous temporality. See also McJannet, who observes “a paradoxical relation between humanist veneration for ancient Greek culture and Christian hostility to the Muslim Turks” (“Genre and Geography,” 87).

the veneration of Mary, monastic traditions, church music, and sacred ritual take on a more mystical, experiential, even sensual, personality. To a greater degree even than Catholics, Eastern Christians saw worship and other related practices as “foretastes of heaven.”⁶⁶ Indeed, Philip Jenkins observes that “[m]ainstream Eastern churches taught daring ideas about the potential of approaching God so closely as actually to become divine”; they made profound intellectual contributions, of course, but nonetheless kept to an established practice of “challeng[ing] . . . reason and mere human wisdom.”⁶⁷ Jenkins is essentially describing the paradox of *theosis*, in which a person can be deified but remain essentially distinct (physically and intellectually) from God.⁶⁸ While this apotheosis of Christian holiness—this highest calling of a devout believer—requires God’s beneficent intervention, *theosis* also presupposes a different view of the Fall, rejecting the Western doctrine of inherited sin.⁶⁹ Instead of the original stain, humans inherit death in a fallen world: sin is a consequence, not *the* cause, of death. This view implies a kinder view of humanity and thus an easier route to intimacy with the creator who made humanity in his image.

In its rudimentary form, the doctrine of *theosis*—more widespread in the East than the West, particularly in a non-scholastic sense—helps characterize what happens to Pericles as he makes that long, painful journey from Antioch to Ephesus.⁷⁰ In Antioch, Pericles is in full com-

⁶⁶ Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 71.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 75–77.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 236–42. Eschewing “all forms of pantheism,” Eastern Christians affirm the individual’s ability to unite with God’s “divine energies, [but] not his divine essence” (237). As Vladimir Lossky famously puts it, human beings are capable of “possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature” (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997], 65).

⁶⁹ As Weatherby explains, “the major pre-Augustinian Fathers did not believe in original sin,” which implies that they rejected not the sin of Adam but rather the notion that sin is somehow inherited (*Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, 156).

⁷⁰ See MacCulloch, who writes that “[w]orship in the Orthodox fashion came to propel first monks, then laypeople beyond the monasteries, towards an idea which over centuries became basic to Christian Orthodox spirituality: union with the divine, or *theosis*—dizzily for humanity, and alarmingly for many Western Christians, the word can be translated as ‘deification’” (*Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 433). Thomas Aquinas discusses *theosis* in his *Summa Theologica*, arguing that the “full participation of the Divinity . . . is the true happiness of man and end of human life” (*The Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas*, 2 vols., ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1952], 3.1.2). Aquinas goes on to quote a similar sentiment in Augustine. But, on the whole, *theosis* became a more theoretical than experiential doctrine within Western Christianity. This is probably owing

mand of his intellectual powers and enjoying unquestioned authority as prince of Tyre. To experience what he describes in Ephesus as a “great miracle,” he must first endure incredible loss (5.3.59). Having suffered and learned a bit of humility, Pericles not only reunites with his wife and daughter, but also gains access to a divine agent and celestial music. His response to this overwhelming joy is to offer himself as a prop for his wife (“O, come, be buried / A second time within these arms” [43–44]), a servant to heaven (“Pure Dian, / I bless thee for thy vision and will offer / Night-oblations to thee” [69–71]), and a benefactor to his children (“We’ll celebrate their nuptials, and ourselves / Will in that kingdom spend our following days; / Our son and daughter shall in Tyrus reign” [81–83]). In the face of “divine incomprehensibility,” Pericles neither trumpets his newly regained powers nor rationalizes the story of his misfortunes but dutifully carries on.⁷¹

What Pericles loses, then, in rational clarity, he gains in achieving proximity to divine forces, within and without himself. His daughter Marina facilitates and mirrors this deifying process. Her virtuous nature is brought into stark relief by a “world” that, to her, “is as a last-ing storm, / Whirring me from my friends” (4.1.18–19). Shakespeare takes pains to demonstrate that even when Marina is under siege by the storms of immorality around her, she safeguards her virtue. Facing the murderer Leonine, Marina (reminiscent of Desdemona) insists that she “never spake bad word, nor did ill turn / To any living creature” (4.1.72–73). When she manages to escape certain death but is forced into prostitution, Marina preaches “divinity” (4.5.4) to would-be customers to protect her virginity, and she deploys “holy words” (138) that transform one man, Lysimachus, into an honorable suitor: “Had I brought hither a corrupted mind,” he declares, “Thy speech had altered it” (108–9). Marina becomes a holy woman in an “unhallowed place” (104), gaining a reputation as much for her mystical ability to conjure as for her virtue (151). By act 5, Marina is fully deified, with Gower describing in his inaugural choric speech how “She sings like one immortal and she dances / As goddess-like to her admired lays” (5.0.3–4). Calling her “godlike perfect” (5.1.196), Pericles echoes Gower’s sentiment after the “resurrected” Marina begins to revivify him, restoring his lost faith (198–201). Marina’s development in the play from paragon of virtue to veritable goddess reinforces the notion that it is possible to remain pure

to another concept that the West inherited from Augustine and tends to emphasize to a greater degree than the East: sin.

⁷¹ Payton, *Light from the Christian East*, 84.

in an impure world. She thus embodies the Eastern Christian belief that original sin is not, in fact, an inherited inner stain but a worldly inheritance that one can partly escape through the process of sanctification.

The logic behind this process is the concept of God Incarnate. Quoting Athanasius (the fourth-century Alexandrian “Father of Orthodoxy”), Diarmaid MacCulloch explains that “particularly in the Orthodox world . . . the Son of God ‘has made us sons of the Father, and deified men by becoming himself man.’”⁷² This core belief underlies Pericles and Marina’s reunion scene. Here they not only achieve individual access to the divine; they also mirror the kind of deified union made possible between God and his creation because of the Incarnation. Their bond therefore constitutes a corrective to—not an echo of—the incestuous relationship between Antiochus and his daughter whereby purity replaces perversion.⁷³ Representing both father and Father (and lord and Lord) to Marina, Pericles’s appearance on the shores of Mytilene both secures his own salvation and reenacts the Word becoming flesh, the history of Marina’s past and parentage brought back to life. This past, hidden in the details of a story, is one that Marina initially laments as lost:

Though wayward Fortune did malign my state,
My derivation was from ancestors
Who stood equivalent with mighty kings,
But time hath rooted out my parentage,
And to the world and awkward casualties
Bound me in servitude.

(5.1.80–85)

Although she is reluctant to recount her “history” since she claims it “would seem like lies / Disdained in the reporting” (108–9), she soon

⁷² MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 216.

⁷³ For a counterexample “extend[ing] the question of incest beyond the borders of Antioch” to inform even the conclusion of the play, see Deane Williams, “Papa Don’t Preach: The Power of Prolixity in *Pericles*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 71 (2002): 595. The play’s incest theme in general has been well explored—but not as a perverted antithesis of Eastern Christian *theosis*. See, for example, Richard Hillman, “Criminalizing the Woman’s Incest: *Pericles* and its Analogues,” in *Female Transgression in Early Modern Britain: Literary and Historical Explorations*, ed. Hillman and Pauline Ruberry-Blanc (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 15–28; Susan Frye, “Incest and Authority in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*,” in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Elizabeth Barnes (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 39–58; Lyndy Abraham, “Weddings, Funerals, and Incest: Alchemical Emblems and Shakespeare’s *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 98 (1999): 523–49; W. B. Thorne, “*Pericles* and the ‘Incest-Fertility’ Opposition,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 22 (1971): 43–56; and Anthony J. Lewis, “‘I feed on mother’s flesh’: Incest and Eating in *Pericles*,” *Essays in Literature* 15 (1988): 147–63.

discovers that the characters of her narrative are a reality revitalized in the telling of them. Brought out of estrangement and servitude through her words, Marina animates and is animated by her incarnate father. Once this occurs, however, Marina falls into relative silence: she speaks nothing in 5.1 after Pericles bestows his blessing (202) and, in her subsequent reunion with her mother, only says, "My heart / Leaps to be gone into my mother's bosom," before kneeling and remaining silent for the rest of the play (5.3.44–45). Hitherto associated with "holy words," Marina now becomes a taciturn—and we might assume wonder-filled—recipient of the inheritance she will in marriage share with Lysimachus: the city of Tyre, her fatherland, in which one might read the promise of spiritual restoration.

Pericles's reaction to his daughter's return substantiates this idea of deification-through-Incarnation and clarifies how he interprets his *own* inheritance: "O, come hither," he tells Marina, "Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget, / Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus, / And found at sea again!" (5.1.184–87).⁷⁴ Invoking God's intervention into human history by way of Jesus, Pericles makes clear that he and Marina have given life to each other. His declaration accordingly aligns his daughter explicitly with Mary—such that the name *Marina* does not simply denote "from the sea" but also suggests a diminutive form of *Mary*. This connection is further reinforced by the special Orthodox name for Jesus's mother. In place of the West's "Immaculate Mother of God," the Eastern Church employs *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer." Focusing on Mary's function as "bearer" rather than "mother" better correlates with Pericles's use of "beget" and further corroborates the play's Eastern Christian dimension. This Greek term also, in a somewhat paradoxical way, humanizes Mary by invoking action not from divinity downward ("Mother of God") but from humanity upward ("God-bearer"). As the well-known Orthodox priest and scholar Alexander Schmemmann famously taught, "Mary is not the great exception but rather the great example."⁷⁵ Although Eastern Christians share with Roman Catholics

⁷⁴ See Philip Edwards's commentary in his edition of *Pericles* (New York: Penguin, 1976). He writes that these lines demonstrate "the ancient paradox of Christianity, in which God the father becomes the son of his own daughter, a virgin" (188).

⁷⁵ Although Schmemmann did not publish this exact sentence, it was preserved, taught, and attributed to him by his students, including Fr. Thomas Hopko. See, for example, Thomas Hopko, "The Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos," *Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*, 20 December 2016, <http://www.antiochian.org/content/feast-entrance-theotokos>. For a book by Schmemmann that asserts the same idea, see *The Virgin Mary: Celebration of Faith*, vol. 3, trans. John A. Jillions (Crestwood, NY:

the belief that Mary was sinless, they do not—as Catholics do—insist dogmatically that she was immaculately conceived (that is, born without the stain of original sin). Criticizing the Western overreliance on reason and its overdetermined perception of sin, Schmemmann argues that the Immaculate Conception constitutes an unnecessary attempt “to explain rationally—and in inappropriate terms—an eschatological mystery” surrounding a fully human woman.⁷⁶ As the “great example,” the *Theotokos* becomes instead the perfect embodiment of the truth of *theosis*, demonstrating the potential for all humankind to become deified.

This notion, in turn, lends itself to the proliferation of Marian figures in the play. For Pericles, Marina’s restoration is merely one of such encounters culminating in his reunion at Ephesus with his wife Thaisa, who also represents aspects of the Eastern Christian *Theotokos* and who constitutes a kind of structural ending point for the play’s exploration of *theosis*. The fact that the denouement and other key scenes in the play take place in Ephesus is significant not only because of its association with the Ecumenical Council in 431 CE that elevated the Virgin Mary to “God-bearer,” but also because Christian tradition has long claimed that Mary moved to this city with Saint John the Evangelist towards the end of her life. This traditional account led some people in the Middle Ages to spearhead a competing argument that Ephesus—not Jerusalem—marks the location of Mary’s Assumption into heaven. Eastern and Western Christianity are consistent on all of these points, even the minority opinion regarding the place at which Mary departs into heaven. The Eastern Church, however, tends to focus less on Mary’s Assumption per se than on her *Dormition*, which has its titular feast day on 15 August (when the Latin Church celebrates the Assumption) and denotes her “falling asleep” prior to being taken up. Although this difference seems minor, it hinges on a rather significant dispute about the nature of Mary. The Roman Catholic Church rationally deduced the Immaculate Conception from the belief in Mary’s Assumption (without death), since they are locked into the logic that all who are born possess original sin and therefore must die. Orthodox Christians, viewing Mary as the “great example” and interpreting sin differently from Western Christians, argue that Mary “shares original sin with mankind” insofar

St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995). Reinforcing her humanity, Schmemmann writes that Mary “is identified with all suffering, with human life in this world, as tragedy and suffering. She is thus the icon of the Church as Mother” (93).

⁷⁶ Schmemmann, *The Virgin Mary*, 63.

as she was born into this world.⁷⁷ Thus, Eastern Christians can flexibly accept her death/falling asleep.

The Greek Christian epitome and the first Latin translation of the Apollonius story coincide with the appearance of Dormition narratives in the East. Studying these Marian accounts, Stephen J. Shoemaker posits that “the late fifth and sixth centuries were the time in which these traditions about the end of Mary’s life entered into Orthodox Christian thought and practice.”⁷⁸ This would suggest that inchoate versions of the established tradition preceded the available narratives and thus began shortly before that Byzantine writer composed the Apollonius epitome. The Eastern, and perhaps even Western, Christian redactors of the Apollonius story arguably had the Dormition in mind when they developed the character known in *Pericles* as Thaisa. And Shakespeare expands on the Latinized source with Marian touches of his own—touches that might, in fact, constitute a partial restoration of that missing Greek epitome. After the lord-priest Cerimon and his attendants discover Thaisa’s casket beached on the shores of Ephesus, their reaction upon opening the lid is perhaps predictable (given her living state) and directs them to the truth. Cerimon comments, “Soft! It smells / Most sweetly in my sense,” and a gentleman agrees that what emanates from the coffin is not the stench of death but “A delicate odour” (3.2.59–60). Convinced that the queen is merely in a deep sleep, Cerimon gets to work, employing all he can in his magical arsenal to revive the seeming corpse. Once confident in his success, Cerimon declares, “[T]his queen will live. Nature awakes; / A warmth breathes out of her! She hath not been / Entranced above five hours. See how she ‘gins / To blow into life’s flower again” (91–94). The language of sweet odors and flowers reflects, of course, Thaisa’s natural living body, her beauty, and her regality, but these descriptions also reinforce her connection to the Virgin Mary, who has long been associated with flowers, especially on her central feast day.⁷⁹ Just as God is the active agent in waking the “sleeping”

⁷⁷ Schmemmann, *The Virgin Mary*, 92. Schmemmann goes on to say, “The wonderful thing about her [Mary] is not that, having no original sin, she did not have to die, but that her death itself was filled to capacity with life in God, and, therefore, changed into ‘blessed assumption.’ It is her total unity with Christ that destroyed her death and made her the beginning, the inauguration of the common resurrection” (ibid.).

⁷⁸ Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 76.

⁷⁹ The floral language is something that Shakespeare expands on in his play. For a relevant discussion, see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). As Rubin observes of Eastern tradition, in particular,

Mary, so the priestly lord Cerimon operates in the person of the divine to revive a queen redolent of flowers: "The heavens," one of his attendant gentlemen declares to Cerimon, "Through you increase our wonder, and sets up / Your fame for ever" (3.2.94–96). While Mary is taken up to heaven to serve God, the revived Thaisa is subsequently led to the Ephesian holy temple, where she intends to serve as votaress in her "vestal livery" (3.4.9). Ultimately, the resurrection of these women reinforces the "fame" of the divine figures that have made it possible.

But we might also read this moment in a different, yet interrelated, way. Thaisa's request to be led to a holy temple recalls another Marian liturgical feast more seriously practiced in Eastern than Western Christianity: the Entry of the Most Holy *Theotokos* into the Temple. Found in what Westerners have long tended to dismiss as the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* ("The Infancy Gospel of James"), the second-century story reports that Mary's parents—Joachim and Anna—took their daughter at the age of three to the holy temple in Jerusalem, where she was received by the high priest and lived a pristine existence apart from her parents until her twelfth year (when she reached puberty). At that point, Mary was taken under the protection of the considerably older but unstintingly supportive Joseph, whose anxieties about impropriety were quelled by the high priest.⁸⁰ Embraced in the East but rejected by Saint Jerome in the West, the Infancy Gospel's divided legacy constitutes one of the defining Marian distinctions between Orthodox Christianity and its Western counterparts.⁸¹ The fact, moreover, that the Infancy Gospel originated in either Syria or Egypt in the second century aligns its genesis with the Apollonius story, both in terms of its timeline and geographic region.⁸²

The play (and its source narrative) differs, however, from the Infancy Gospel account on several points: Thaisa is an adult and not a child; her temple is in Ephesus and not Jerusalem; she is not a virgin when she becomes a votaress; and her Marian "resurrection" precedes her own entrance into the temple. Despite all this, Thaisa's story (in-

"The Dormition saw the exquisite meeting of heaven and earth. It was a special end for a special woman, marked by fine fragrances that rose from her body" (56).

⁸⁰ See Ronald F. Hock, *The Life of Mary and Birth of Jesus: The Ancient Infancy Gospel of James* (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press, 1997).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 33. Hock describes how Jerome's "rejection of the Infancy Gospel effectively blocked its spread in the West" and contributed to its placement on a "list of unacceptable books. . . . As a result, no Latin manuscripts of the Gospel exist; it effectively disappeared in the West for the next thousand years" (38).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 19.

cluding her eventual reunion with Pericles) has a great deal in common with the liturgical feast and its broader implications about the nature of the *Theotokos*. The temple, for one, reinforces Mary and Thaisa's shared innocence. Just as Mary's early life at the Jerusalem temple stresses her virginal purity (which her pregnancy, in Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, does nothing to undermine), so Thaisa's decision to become an Ephesian priestess reinforces the fact that her marriage and pregnancy do nothing to diminish what is prized about her character at the beginning of the play: her chastity.⁸³ Second, the holy temple in both cases becomes an extension of the women themselves. In so doing, it constitutes the supreme representation of *theosis*, structurally indicating the path that all people are invited to take. The notion of "*Mary as Temple*," Schmemmann argues, "finds its ultimate expression in the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. The Temple is the place of Divine presence, of encounter between God and man, of the revelation of Divine glory. In this feast the ultimate mystery of man as Temple of God is revealed to us."⁸⁴ Reading *Pericles* against this Eastern Christian backdrop clarifies Thaisa's characterization across—and function in—the play. In her first appearance on stage, she is treated as a veritable icon, with her father introducing her as one who "[s]its here like beauty's child, whom Nature gat / For men to see and, seeing, wonder at" (2.2.6–7). At the end of the play, Pericles's happy reunion with his wife depends on his turning toward the holy temple that houses her and away from the violent retribution he had planned to inflict upon Cleon (5.1.239–42). In her miraculous unveiling at the Ephesian temple, Thaisa becomes the object of the other characters' Marian devotion: vaguely recalling the Eastern Christian practice of kissing icons, Pericles upon first seeing his wife remarks that "on the touching of her lips" he hopes to "[m]elt and no more be seen" (5.3.42–43); Marina reverently kneels to her mother (46); and Helicanus addresses her with "Hail, madam, and my queen" (49). In a play structured, in part, according to the principles of *theosis*, the conclusion at Ephesus ties together the process of deification experienced by its three central characters.

And yet, I must reiterate an important point here: *Pericles* is largely pagan in appearance. For one, the deity that Thaisa addresses upon waking is ostensibly non-Christian: "O dear Diana," she fearfully asks, "[W]here am I? Where's my lord? / What world is this?" (3.2.104–5).

⁸³ According to Hock, while the canonical gospels tend to emphasize Mary's obedient nature, the writer of the Infancy Gospel heavily underscores her "purity" (*ibid.*, 28).

⁸⁴ Schmemmann, *The Virgin Mary*, 62.

Pericles, too, at the end of the play promises to offer “[n]ight-oblations” to Diana (5.3.71) for guiding him to *her* temple in Ephesus, where Thaisa has been serving alongside the “maiden priests” (5.1.229). As Caroline Bicks observes, “Shakespeare refers to the goddess over a dozen times in the play, whereas Gower’s work and Laurence Twine’s *Patterne of Paine-full Adventures*, his immediate sources, name her only twice.”⁸⁵ Even the earliest Latin version of the story describes “someone who looked like an angel,” not Diana, visiting Pericles prior to his reunion with his wife.⁸⁶ But if Shakespeare on one level seems to be strengthening the pagan context of the play, he is also intensifying the link to Mary, whose theological role was officially established at that Ecumenical Council in Ephesus. That is, the play’s Eastern Christian components depend on Shakespeare’s *highlighting* its pagan features. “The [Eastern Christian] appellation *Theotokos* is of particular importance,” Timothy Ware argues, “for it provides the key to the Orthodox cult of the Virgin.”⁸⁷ Explaining that Marian veneration is inextricably bound up with worship of God, Ware in his choice of words suggests that this “key” was fashioned in Ephesus *over* the cult of Diana and in a grand replaying of the battle waged between Paul and the Ephesian worshippers of Diana described in Acts 19.

That battle, however, is arguably not happening in *Pericles*. Classifying *Pericles*’s Diana among “Christian equivalents,” Hunt contends that they “neither detract from nor supersede pagan counterparts but instead help early modern playgoers and readers better understand this idea: that ancient religion and Christianity, while fundamentally different, can give the impression of complementing one another.”⁸⁸ This is perhaps even more significant during a period in which religious drama was explicitly forbidden after the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. Writers circumvented this problem by allowing pagan themes and characters partly to denote Christian ones. In other words, in Shakespeare’s world, Diana and Mary can symbiotically exist such that Thaisa can be called a “nun” (5.3.15), and in *The Comedy of Errors*—Shakespeare’s other play set in Ephesus and also based on part of the Apollonius story—the temple of Diana can house an abbess.⁸⁹ In this theatrical climate, early

⁸⁵ Bicks, “Backsliding at Ephesus,” 205.

⁸⁶ Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, 173.

⁸⁷ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 262.

⁸⁸ Hunt, “A New Taxonomy,” 48. See also Walsh, “‘A Priestly Farewell,’” 91.

⁸⁹ For another discussion of this tendency, see Hart, “‘Great is Diana’ of Shakespeare’s Ephesus.”

modern audiences were certainly capable of mutually accommodating pagan and Christian, and Protestant and Catholic, in their imaginations. I contend that knowledgeable playgoers who had already mentally travelled outside the borders of the West could manage even more, envisioning Eastern Christian practices alongside those of their Western counterparts.⁹⁰

If we continue to believe with Hunt in *Pericles's* "syncretistic" character and with Finkelstein that "more than one kind of theology circulates throughout the play," then it is possible to see how *Pericles* incorporates pagan, Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Christian elements—the last largely ignored by most scholars but important in understanding the play's genesis as a Christian-inflected text and the essential background for its geographic context.⁹¹ Adherence to a fuller notion of "religious amalgamation" softens the play's seeming anxieties about what Bicks describes as religious "backsliding" and allows for a broader appreciation of the complexities at work in a play with an incredibly storied history.⁹² Though we do not know precisely what the original Apollonius narrative contained—or even the contents of its Greek Christian epitome—Shakespeare's literary choices take us directly back to that colorful and varied world of Asia Minor. There audiences can escape into not simply a pagan setting but also an Eastern Christian one whose final stop is the multifaceted city of Ephesus. That this amalgam in certain ways defies conventional reasoning is consistent with Western perceptions of the marvelous East, where disparate religions and cultural practices interwove themselves in fascinating ways.

⁹⁰ Although not going so far as to argue for an Eastern Christian dimension in *Pericles*, Bicks indirectly lends support to this interpretation, maintaining that the play reflects a "heated religious debate" about the purification ceremony allowing new mothers to re-enter the church ("Backsliding at Ephesus," 207). Early Protestants, Bicks argues, became uncomfortable with this practice, for it reinforced their continued alliance to Catholicism and thus (in their minds) paganism, both of which they discredited as "cults of the Mother" (217). For Bicks, the pagan setting in *Pericles* stages the Protestant fear of a reversion to their Catholic roots; this is consistent with the tendency among Protestants to liken "the Church of England's return to Catholicism with an early Christian Ephesus tottering on the brink of paganism" (208). To build her case, Bicks associates Ephesus with struggles between paganism and the Latin Church, and she rightly points to the many Catholic references in *Pericles* to substantiate her claims. Yet several of the "Popish" practices reviewed in her article are also traditions in Eastern Christianity, including the churching of women. Moreover, Bicks herself articulates that even as "Ephesus exemplified England and its post-Reformation conflicts," the city became "the site of the most powerful [Eastern] Christian church in Asia minor" (210).

⁹¹ Hunt, "Syncretistic Religion"; and Finkelstein, "*Pericles*, Paul, and Protestantism," 101.

⁹² Bicks, "Backsliding at Ephesus." See also Walsh, "A Priestly Farewell," 81.

ROMANCING THE EAST

For Pericles even to experience the miraculous reunion at Ephesus, however, he must first survive a catastrophe at sea that unmistakably associates him with the biblical Jonah and, through that connection, with the Christian East and its valuing of *theosis*. This catastrophic event becomes one of the hallmark features of a new genre that Shakespeare develops with *Pericles* at the helm. Early in the play, Gower describes the event by comparing Dame Fortune to a whale, yet the allusion is clear:

All perishen of man, of pelf,
 Ne aught escapend but himself;
 Till Fortune, tired with doing bad,
 Threw him [Pericles] ashore to give him glad.
 (2.0.35–38)

The fishermen expand on this allusion later in the scene, before they even meet Pericles. Comparing “rich misers” to a whale capable of consuming the impoverished, the fishermen remind the audience not simply of Pericles’s recent ordeal but of the potential for *anyone* to become a Jonah *or* a whale (2.1.28–43). Thaisa herself becomes another Jonah later in the play. Seemingly dead at sea in the middle of a terrible storm, she initiates the sort of disruption that Jonah does in the biblical account. Pericles at first resists but eventually capitulates to the sailors’ pleas to cast his wife overboard, imagining “the belching whale . . . o’erwhelm[ing]” her body (3.1.62–63). Cerimon and his attendants echo this allusion at Ephesus when Thaisa’s coffin washes ashore: “Wrench it open straight. / If the sea’s stomach be o’ercharged with gold, / ‘Tis a good constraint of fortune / It belches upon us” (3.2.55–58).⁹³ As the fishermen earlier suggest, the entire world of *Pericles* recalls the story of the seafaring Jonah, who first disobeys God and makes for Tarshish only to learn a lesson in patience, duty, and forgiveness.

Although the book of Jonah is a canonical text in all branches of Christianity, MacCulloch argues that “the Church of the East” — “united by adhering to its Syrian roots” and “displaying the vigorous individuality which Syriac Christianity had exhibited from its earliest years” — especially “treasured the memory of the prophet Jonah . . . honour[ing] him as a symbol of the Resurrection.”⁹⁴ Given the research suggesting that the Apollonius story originated in Asia Minor, perhaps even Syria,

⁹³ Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, 120–22; and Hunt, “Shakespeare’s *Pericles* and the Acts of the Apostles,” 302.

⁹⁴ MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 249.

and given its probable next step as a Greek Christian epitome, it is not surprising for clear parallels with Jonah to make their way into the narrative. The typological implications of the biblical adventure story further support such a connection. Christians of all denominations have long recognized that Jonah—trapped for three days in the belly of a whale—is a prototype of Christ. In the play, this typology extends to Pericles and Thaisa.⁹⁵ But Thaisa's incorporation into that typological framework also reinforces her association with the Eastern Dormition. If Jonah prefigures Christ, then Mary's story post-figures that central event. Nowhere is this more clearly defined than in the Eastern Christian tradition with its emphasis on religious transcendence and deification.

And no dramatic genre is better equipped to accommodate these intricacies than tragicomic romance.⁹⁶ Even as typology encourages coherence in biblical exegesis, it also breeds and presumes complexity, with collapsing timelines and multiple figures and narratives operating in conjunction. The history of *Pericles* is the very definition of multiplicity in that it pulls together threads from different religious traditions, geographic regions, cultural practices, temporalities, literary modes, and (of course) authors. Suitably, then, it belongs to a genre capable of sustaining these paradoxes and comfortably housing these aesthetic variations. As a generic amalgamation of tragedy and comedy, tragicomic romance is also in keeping with the play's staging of *theosis*. Instead of an incestuous perversion of two dramatic genres, tragicomic romance amounts to a holy union consistent with its dramatizing of miraculous reunions and redemptive reconciliations—in short, the human life in search of metaphysical transcendence. Although Shakespeare's tragicomic romances have long been criticized for their eccentric plots and their galling defiance of the unities, they also possess a stylistic grace and generosity unlike any other dramatic genre. Remarking on *Pericles* in particular, Barbara A. Mowat affirms that it “stands as a network of connections linking various stories of families separated and reunited, at least two of which . . . were already, by the early sixteenth century,

⁹⁵ As Hamlin observes, “Like Jonah, she is cast up on shore, and, like Jesus, whom Jonah prefigures, she ‘dies’ and is miraculously brought back to life” (*The Bible in Shakespeare*, 122).

⁹⁶ Barbara A. Mowat argues that “[n]either name [*tragicomedy* or *romance*] . . . serves to fix the plays in a recognizable category of Jacobean drama, but both names—or, better, the names in combination—lead us to a family of works within which Shakespeare's late plays clearly belong” (“‘What's in a Name?’ Tragicomedy, Romance, or Late Comedy,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, 134–35).

part of the dramatized romance tradition."⁹⁷ Characteristics like these have led Cyrus Mulready to consider "ranging" *Pericles* to be Shakespeare's "most obvious contribution to the genre of stage romance."⁹⁸ For him and other scholars, violation of the unities is an aesthetic necessity in maintaining one of the genre's hallmark features: its "global geographic imaginings," its attempt to dramatize on stage the Renaissance dream of expansiveness.⁹⁹

In another respect, though, that expansive energy is temporal as well as geographic. Although technically a new dramatic genre in the early modern period, tragicomic romance was, according to sixteenth-century theorists, extremely old. Exploring the "centrality" of Homer's *Odyssey* "in the Renaissance project of theorizing tragicomedies" and elsewhere its relevance to *Pericles*, Sarah Dewar-Watson argues that this undervalued Greek prototype "allowed critics to claim not only that there was a classical precedent for mixed genre, but that tragicomedies was, in some sense, one of the oldest—and therefore the most prestigious—literary genres of all."¹⁰⁰ Yet insofar as early modern dramatic iterations of the genre developed directly from the romance narrative (the kind upon which *Pericles* is based), the theorists were correct. Madeleine Doran, insisting on its inherent bond with "romantic story," contends that *tragicomedies* is "not a breakdown" of comedy and tragedy but "antecedent to them in medieval and early renaissance stage practice. It was romantic story which, under the influence of inherited conceptions of ancient drama, got pulled about and shaped into the separable forms of tragedy and comedy."¹⁰¹ Based on this genealogy, *Pericles* is both a late play and an early one, a literary retrospective in which Shakespeare is "reassessing the premises on which his art had always been based" and a unified dramatic genre functioning as an origin for the modern Renaissance play.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Mowat, "'What's in a Name?,'" 138. The dramatized stories she specifies are "that of Eustace and that of the King of Marcylls in *Mary Magdalene*" (ibid.).

⁹⁸ Mulready, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage*, 30.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 49. See also Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and Michael Murrin, *Trade and Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁰ Dewar-Watson, "Aristotle and Tragicomedies," in *Early Modern Tragicomedies*, ed. Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 26 and 16. See also her essay, "Shakespeare's Dramatic Odysseys: Homer as a Tragicomic Model in *Pericles* and *The Tempest*," *Classical and Modern Literature* 25.1 (2005): 23–40.

¹⁰¹ Doran, *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 186; and Mowat, "'What's in a Name?,'" 140.

¹⁰² Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 173.

In its dedication to traversing that abyss of space and time, *Pericles* invites us to reevaluate its relationship to the Apollonius story, one whose history touches not only the primitive roots of literary form but also the sacred wellsprings of the Christian East. This religion arguably helped shape the ancient story's development in the West and, in turn, offered Shakespeare some additional aesthetic features he could use to begin experimenting with the most complex and least understood of all the dramatic genres. Underneath all this complexity, though, rests a wonderful simplicity, for the pivotal component—the centuries-old tale itself—is first and foremost a story about heritage, a search for birth-right, an invitation to uncover sources. Shakespeare found a particularly hospitable environment indeed for tragicomic romance, which at its core—and beneath its restless expansiveness—seeks “the recovery of spiritual integrity” and “convey[s] a sense of hope for some kind of redemptive return to the garden.”¹⁰³ This garden space has perhaps always been more accessible to an Eastern Christian world, which has demonstrated since antiquity that it can gaze upon evil and still profess a not-quite-as-fallen humanity. As Shakespeare's first foray into tragicomic romance, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in so many ways represents an escape to the beginning.

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¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 66–67; and Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, 167.