Skenè Texts DA • 4

What is a Greek Source on the Early English Stage? Fifteen New Essays

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi and Tania Demetriou

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SKENÈ. Texts and Studies (https://textsandstudies.skeneproject.it/index.php/TS)
Supplement to *SKENÈ. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*
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info@skeneproject.it
Edizioni ETS
Palazzo Roncioni - Lungarno Mediceo, 16, I-56127 Pisa
info@edizioniets.com
www.edizioniets.com
Distribuzione
Messaggerie Libri SPA
Sede legale: via G. Verdi 8 - 20090 Assago (MI)
Promozione
PDE PROMOZIONE SRL
via Zago 2/2 - 40128 Bologna

ISBN (pdf) 9-788846-7-6957-2
ISBN 9-788846-7-6958-9
ISSN 2421-4353

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3

Classicism as Medievalism: Gower & Mediation in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

Jane Raisch

Abstract

This essay examines the role of mediation in the play *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Focusing particularly on the chorus-figure, John Gower, I argue that the play uses the self-conscious representation of acts of mediation to explore how the medieval textual tradition transmits knowledge and ideas about classical antiquity. By comparing the speeches of Gower in *Pericles* to the language of cultural mediation and difference in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, I demonstrate the way in which the play ventriloquises its own source material to articulate ideas around textual adaptation and ancient reception. In conclusion, I demonstrate the play's commitment to putting acts of cultural and textual mediation on display, suggesting this investment in the overt representation of mediation constitutes a genuine interest in indirect forms of cultural reception.

Keywords: Mediation; Classical Reception; Gower; Medievalism; Hellenism; *Confessio Amantis*

The plays of Shakespeare are rarely heralded for their historical and cultural consistency. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* happily yokes classical Athens to a decidedly English world of Faerie, while *Cymbeline* blithely moves back and forth between Roman Britain and Renaissance Italy. But of Shakespeare's many culturally fluid plays, it is perhaps *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre* – most likely a collaboration between Shakespeare and another playwright – that most explicitly examines the very idea of historical and cultural fluidity. Featuring the medieval English poet, John Gower, as a chorus and yet set in an unmistakably Greek Mediterranean world, *Pericles* presents its various cultural and historical energies as particularly unintegrated. Gower, who frames the play in medieval terms, exists in a narrative and dramaturgical register entirely distinct from the play's action. The play's action, in turn, unfolds across Hellenistic Greek city-states and is performed by characters named "Simonides", "Aeschines",

and "Cleon".[1] For this reason, the play has elicited rather divergent assessments of where its cultural loyalties lie. Linda McJannet has called the play "a Hellenistic map of the ancient world" and Vassiliki Markidou has argued that "Greek history" is "what ties all the main loci of the play together" (McJannet 1998, 95-6; Markidou 2017, 172). In contrast, Helen Cooper has decisively declared that *Pericles* is "Shakespeare's most comprehensive engagement with the medieval world" and that "it represents, not just the continuing life of the medieval, but the invention of medievalism, the valuing of the medieval world for its own sake" (2010, 196).

The argument of this essay seeks to find a middle ground between readings of the play as principally medieval English and readings of the play as principally Greek by highlighting the play's own self-conscious interest in the work of mediation. Gower's inclusion in the play is not merely a nod to the English medieval tradition writ large, it is a nod to the play's very own English medieval source material. Gower's fourteenth-century English vernacular poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, constitutes one of the play's central sources for the "Apollonius, Prince of Tyre" narrative tradition, making Gower-the-chorus a highly self-aware emblem of the play's narrative and cultural affiliations.[2] While many scholars have posited that the "Apollonius" story, with its many similarities to Greek romance, was based on a Greek original, the earliest extant text of the narrative is in Latin and dates back only to the ninth century CE (Archibald 1991, 27-51; Kortekaas 2004). In such cases, the medieval world provides our only link to a text either from or about Greek antiquity and *Pericles* unabashedly puts this fact on display. By capitalising on the self-awareness surrounding questions of narrative mediation already found in Gower's *Confessio*, *Pericles* presents the dramatization of an elusive Greek world as part of a longstanding transhistorical literary project. Far from being uninterested in the ancient world in favour of the medieval (or vice versa), *Pericles* puts the act of staging Greek

1 On the specifically Hellenistic nature of *Pericles*'s Greek setting, see McJannet 1998.

2 *Pericles* also directly draws on a 1576 prose text by Laurence Twine called *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* which is essentially a translation of the medieval *Gesta Romanorum*; see Warren 2003, 13.

antiquity on stage, self-consciously linking dramatic representation to forms of narrative reception that embrace rather than efface the role of intermediaries.

"Ancient Gower": Theorising Mediation in the Prologue

The opening lines of *Pericles*, spoken by Gower, are some of the most frequently discussed in the entire play. Many scholars have noted how the prologue puts story-telling and narrative production, as well as a thematic interest in the past, front and centre (Markidou 2017, 173; Cooper 2010, 197-200). But few readers of the play's opening have recognised the extent to which the concept of mediation governs this exploration of narrative production; narrative production is tied not simply to an idea of the past but rather to an idea of moving between multiple pasts. The first twenty lines are worth quoting in full:

> GOWER To sing a song that old was sung,
> From ashes ancient Gower is come,
> Assuming man's infirmities
> To glad your ear and please your eyes.
> It hath been sung at festivals,
> On ember eves and holy ales,
> And lords and ladies in their lives
> Have read it for restoratives.
> The purchase is to make men glorious,
> *Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius.*
> If you, born in these latter times
> When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
> And that to hear an old man sing
> May to your wishes pleasure bring,
> I life would wish, and that I might,
> Waste it for you like taper-light.
> This' Antioch, then: Antiochus the Great
> Built up this city for his chiefest seat,
> The fairest in all Syria,
> I tell you what mine authors say.
> (1.1-20)[3]

3 I refer throughout the essay to the Oxford Shakespeare edition of the

The first two lines, though deceptively simple, immediately establish the play's interest in historical multiplicity and 'multi-layeredness': "To sing a song that old was sung, / From ashes ancient Gower is come". Though both story – here archaically called "song" – and storyteller are presented as old, their respective forms of 'oldness' are differentiated. For "ancient Gower", the song he comes to sing already has an older tradition of being sung, a detail that not only presents the song itself as old but also measures that 'oldness' in terms of transmission rather than composition. Gower, brought on stage to sing a song with an already old tradition of being sung, is thus presented not as the author of the narrative to follow but rather as himself a privileged transmitter. This emphasis on transmission is made even more explicit a few lines later in the prologue when he presents his description of the first scene not as an act of dramaturgical conjuration but rather of textual consultation: "I tell you what mine authors say". In naming himself in these opening lines as "Gower", but in articulating that naming through a description of narrative reception rather than authorial production, Gower redefines the parameters of his own authority. Though Gower's name would have had immediate associations with revered notions of authorship, this association is linked not to narrative creation but rather to narrative dissemination. Gower thus exploits the work of mediation that is intrinsic to the role of a chorus and extends it to encompass the work of narrative reception. Gower's staging of the play's source material becomes inextricably linked to that source material's own narrative mediation.

By framing his introduction of the story's historical setting in Antioch in terms of textual consultation, Gower further implies a chronological difference between the story's very ancient setting and its somewhat less ancient textual reception. Though neither Gower the author of the *Confessio* nor Shakespeare and his collaborator would have known specifics about ancient chronology, the prologue nonetheless evinces an awareness of the multi-layered nature of ancient literary history. Though set in a vaguely Hellenistic Greek world (Antioch was the capital of the Seleucid empire), the Apollonius narrative, if it does indeed have roots in

play, which does not include act divisions: (ed. Warren) 2003, 81.

classical antiquity, almost certainly would have dated to a much later historical period, probably the second through fourth centuries CE, the period when most scholars believe the four major Greek romances to have been written.[4] In this period of Greek (and Roman) literature, nostalgia for previous ancient pasts (Homeric, classical Athenian or Hellenistic) was a hallmark of narrative composition, embedding a sense of historical multilayeredness in the texts that were produced (Raisch 2016, 932-5). Barbara Mowat and Stuart Gillespie have argued that Shakespeare's late romances (to include *Pericles*) particularly channel the *ethos* and narratological structure of Greek romance as a form (Mowat 2009, 236-46; Gillespie 2004, 225-40). Moreover, as Helen Moore, Tanya Pollard, and Steve Mentz have recently demonstrated, the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus was widely known and available throughout sixteenth-century England (Moore 2015; Pollard 2008; Mentz 2006). These insights suggest that even if the Apollonius narrative as it was understood in the sixteenth century lacked direct connections to Greek romance, it is entirely plausible that the play *Pericles* drew on Greek romance as a form for its approach to narrating the past.

Gower's sense of temporal and historical multiplicity pervades the prologue, even infusing his commonplace pleas for the audience's approval. When asking the audience to "accept my rhymes", he couches this request in terms of historical difference: "If you, born in these latter times / When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes". Gower thus injects yet another temporal layer – the time period of the contemporary audience – into the play's opening. Roger Warren has suggested that these lines constitute an allusion to the seventeenth century specifically by evoking the growing popularity of poetic wit, famously associated with John Donne and the Metaphysical poets (Shakespeare 2003, 91n12). Gower is therefore not only pointing out the archaism that his own poetic tradition represents but does so by gesturing towards the poetic

4 It is for this reason that B.P. Reardon includes the ninth-century BCE Latin story of "Apollonius, Prince of Tyre" in his collected English translations of Greek romances. As he himself points out, the story shares many thematic similarities with other Greek romances and there is some evidence there may be a lost Greek version of the story, Reardon 2019, 856-98. See also Kortekaas 2004.

fashions of a specifically imagined contemporary moment. Gower thus presents himself in the prologue as operating across at least four distinct temporalities: the very ancient (nominally Hellenistic) past of the setting of *Pericles*, the ambiguous pasts of the story's creation and reception, the medieval "ancient" past of his own time, and finally the contemporary present of the audience. Seen in this way, Gower's medievalism becomes yet another expression of Gower's intermediary position – Gower and the medieval necessarily function as a conduit between antiquity (or antiquities) and the seventeenth century.

Gower's position as an intermediary is both underscored and complicated by his own ghostliness. Risen "from ashes" he has been revivified specifically for the purpose of relating this story, an idea which immediately connects Gower's dramaturgical function as chorus to the play's thematic interest in recovering the past. Although he has taken on human corporeal form ("man's infirmities") to serve as narrator, his observations regarding the on-going popularity of the story ("It hath been sung at festivals / On ember eves and holy ales") implies a long historical view of the story's reception. He is cast as a spectral witness to the narrative's circulation both before and after his own time. In this sense, Gower introduces perhaps even a fifth temporality into the prologue, or perhaps, better put, a kind of atemporality. His ghostly ability to be both of a time and outside of all times captures the strange relationship between temporality and mediation, a relationship perhaps best understood via the Derridean *portmanteau* of the hauntological (Derrida 2006). The play's investment in the hypervisibility of its source material manifests as a failure of normative narrative ontology; Gower comes back from the dead to conspicuously bring the play's narrative into existence, overtly contaminating the narrative's theatrical present with the spectre of its poetic past.

Gower's status as a ghostly intermediary is therefore characterised by a sense of distance to and difference from the story and the audience; Gower 'belongs' with neither group. And while dramatic choruses are always situated in a kind of representational limbo as neither diegetic nor exactly exegetic, the complex historical layering that so defines the opening lines of the play links that representational 'inbetweeness' to a self-conscious exploration

of narrative mediation. Indeed, one of the most overt expressions of Gower's difference – his use of octosyllabic couplets instead of iambic pentameter – exemplifies this link. Meant to imitate the meter of the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower's use of the octosyllabic locates his difference precisely in his association with the play's narrative sources. The intrusion, so to speak, of the style of the source text separates Gower from both the world he is representing and the audience he is guiding. The conceptual work of mediation, dramaturgical and cultural, that Gower exemplifies becomes directly linked to the work of textual transmission and reception; Gower is not merely a general figure of ancient *gravitas* but rather a specific figure of textual authority, a kind of 'ventriloquiser' of his own poetic text.

Gower as Author: Mediation and Adaptation Between the *Confessio Amantis* and *Pericles*

The particularly explicit evocation of the *Confessio Amantis* in a play self-consciously concerned with questions of mediation and reception is no coincidence. In delivering his description of historical mediation via the metrical style of the *Confessio*, Gower gestures towards a deeper overlap between the themes of *Pericles* and those of the *Confessio* as a literary work. While the fourteenth-century poem does furnish the play with its plot, its narrator, and its metrical variety, it also, I want to argue, partly imbues the play with the very sense of cultural and narrative self-consciousness this essay has been exploring thus far. The *Confessio* is a source itself preoccupied with questions of sources, a text that embraces its own status as a textual intermediary and as a space for ancient literary receptions.

It is with the question of adaptation and navigating past traditions that Gower (the author) opens the *Confessio* as a whole:

> Of hem that writen ous tofore
> The bokes duelle, and we therfore
> Ben tawht of that was write tho:
> Forthi good is that we also
> In oure tyme among ous hiere
> Do wryte of newe som matiere,

> Essampled of these olde wyse,
> So that it myhte in such a wyse,
> Whan we ben dede and elleswhere,
> Beleve to the worldes eere
> In tyme comende after this.
> (Prologue, 1-11)

As in the opening of *Pericles*, the temporality of narrative reception here is multidirectional; the past ("Of hem that writen ous tofore") is both the model for, and the source of, "newe matiere", which in turn functions as a cornerstone for future knowledge and learning after Gower and his historical moment have passed ("whan we ben dede and elleswhere"). The creation of new texts is therefore presented as intrinsically intermediary, a crucial pivot – or what Russell Peck has called a "bridge" – between the inherited learning of the past and the ongoing learning of the future (2006, 1).

To a degree even more pronounced than in *Pericles*, where the Apollonius story is initially called a "song", in the *Confessio*, this preoccupation with the learning of the past is presented in explicitly bookish terms. Reading, writing, and the production of texts suffuses how these introductory lines imagine the historical continuum between past, present, and future. In describing "bokes" as repositories – as things that "dvelle", glossed by Peck as "remain" – for those who have "writen ous tofore", Gower ascribes a kind of immortality to the written word as it is preserved in the material text (Peck 2006, 43). In one sense, then, we might see the atemporal haunting of *Pericles* by the ghostly Gower-chorus as an adaptation of the *Confessio*'s own preoccupation with lasting presences of the past. But where in the *Confessio* these presences are envisaged through the material book as a vehicle for conveying wisdom, in *Pericles*, these presences are more dramatically and hauntologically conceived through the resurrection of the authorial persona himself. The shift in conceiving of past tradition as principally textual to principally oral mimics the adaptation of the play's material from poetry to drama. The figure of Gower as chorus, not just the work he does as a theatrical device, becomes an enactment of the work of adaptation.

But as we have seen, the *Confessio*'s emphasis on bookishness is not entirely absent from *Pericles*. The *Confessio*'s vision of the past

as experienced primarily as material text finds expression in the chorus Gower's reference to consulting his "authors":

> GOWER This' Antioch, then: Antiochus the Great
> Built up this city for his chiefest seat,
> The fairest in all Syria,
> I tell you what mine authors say:
> The king unto him took a fere . . .
> (1.1-21)

This reference to a bookish vision of past narrative tradition comes right when Gower is describing the play's first ancient setting, Antioch. Such a moment of theatrical and imaginative conjuration – a moment when the audience is being asked to suspend their disbelief and let the theatre work its magic – is an odd place to interject an almost citational reference to book-learning. A quasi-scholarly idea of past narratives as contained in books ripe for consultation intrudes upon a theatrical idea of past narrative as urgently and immediately recreated through the conceit of dramatic representation. Antioch here is at once footnote and vivid theatrical restoration. Such an idea conforms to Constance C. Relihan's apt observation that the Gower of *Pericles* "has a simultaneous function as a means of creating dislocation and identification" (1992, 293). At precisely the moment we might expect Gower to fully immerse the audience in the ancient world of Antioch and the story he is about to tell, he punctures that immersion by subtly (and briefly) relegating Antioch (and the Apollonius story) to the pages of books.

The intrusion of this bookish reference in the midst of Gower's recreation of Antioch and the Apollonius narrative serves to present the ancient Greek world specifically as an object of mediation. It is not Gower as chorus alone who is responsible for the story's recreation on stage, but rather a transhistorical 'team' of authors to include Gower the author and Gower the author's own collection of authors. This emphasis on the textual mediation of both Antioch specifically and the Apollonius story more generally is itself fittingly drawn from the *Confessio*. Echoing the importance of "bokes" in the opening lines of the poem, the opening lines of the Apollonius episode frame the narrative in terms of its own textual sources:

> Of a cronique in daies gon,
> The which is cleped *Pantheon*,
> In loves cause I rede thus,
> Hou that the grete Antiochus
> Of whom that Antioche tok
> His ferste name, as seith the bok,
> Was coupled to a noble queene,
> And hadde a dowhter hem betwene:
> (8.271-8)

In language similar to (though, again, more overtly bookish than) the prologue of *Pericles*, Gower the author presents his own role as that of a reader and narrative transmitter rather than a writer. Twice in the space of only four lines Gower draws his readers' attention to his own reliance on other textual sources: he "redes" the story of Apollonius in a book called *Pantheon* and affirms that his information about Antioch comes from "the bok". Like Gower the chorus's reference to "mine authors" in the prologue to *Pericles*, Gower the author's qualification – "as seith the bok" – in the midst of his introduction of Antiochus and Antioch presents the city as a product of texts. The act of evoking Antioch is thus explicitly framed as, in part, a transhistorical act of reading; Antioch's status as an ancient locale that emerges from the pages of books is consistently emphasised in this story's retelling.

The *Confessio*'s emphasis on the mediated nature of the Apollonius story is underscored by the opening evocation of a specific textual source: the twelfth-century Latin chronicle, *Pantheon*, by Godfrey of Viterbo. Offering a more overtly scholarly image of narrative transmission than the general reference to "mine authors" or the "old" in *Pericles*, the *Confessio* frames the story of Apollonius in explicitly citational terms: an assertion of antiquity – "a cronique in daies gon" – is linked to a specific, named historical source (Godfrey's *Pantheon*). This emphasis on citational specificity captures the Apollonius narrative's particularly central role in networks of textual transmission and reception in the ninth through the fourteenth centuries. Elizabeth Archibald has argued that the Apollonius narrative is a particularly rich, and underappreciated, example of cross-cultural textual transmission in the context of

medieval England and Europe. The story "appears in one hundred and fourteen Latin manuscripts, written between the ninth and seventeenth centuries; vernacular versions were produced all over medieval Europe, as far afield as Denmark and Greece, Spain, and Bohemia" (Archibald 1991, 3). It is also "the earliest known English 'romance' and 'must be the only fictional narrative to survive in Old, Middle, and Modern English" (ibid.).

Gower, of course, would not have fully appreciated the long and cross-cultural history of reception associated with the Apollonius narrative, but it seems likely he had a strong sense of the story's penchant for being retold. As evidenced by his inclusion of several plot details not found in Viterbo's version of the Apollonius story (or found in the version repeated in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a text Gower also almost certainly knew), it is clear that Gower relied on sources beyond Viterbo that he did not elect to name (Archibald 1998, 192). Peck has suggested that Gower may have consulted an eleventh-century Latin prose version, simply titled the *Historia Apollonii Tyrii*, which may have been, in turn, a source used by Viterbo (2006, 279). At a minimum, then, Gower understood that the Apollonius story enjoyed widespread circulation in Latin texts going back several centuries, that it was an artefact of perpetual retelling, that is, of perpetual mediation.

Throughout this long history of retelling and reception, the Greek dimensions of the Apollonius story remained an important part of its narrative identity. In Viterbo's *Pantheon*, which is structured according to the chronology of human history, the story of Apollonius comes right after a discussion of the conquests of Alexander the Great, locating it firmly within a Hellenistic vision of the Greek Mediterranean (Archibald 1991, 185-6). John Ganim has argued in his study of Gower's use of space and place that the *Confessio* particularly puts the Hellenic origins of many of these stories on display (Ganim 2007). For Ganim, Gower's authorial preoccupation with representations of geography manifests itself via an intensification of markedly Hellenic narratological tropes and conceits: "exile, abduction and displacement, and their often accidental and coincidental episodic motivation" (2007, 105). Gower, in a sense, accesses the embedded Hellenism of his non-Greek sources through the concerns of his narrative craft; Greekness

expresses itself not simply via geography but also through the intersection of geography and narratology.

Even when Gower is clearly ignorant about the specifics of Greek cultural practice, he articulates this ignorance through an attentiveness to the fact of cultural difference. The episode at the gymnasium in Pentapolis, one that was often challenging for medieval writers because of its depiction of a specifically Greek conception of athletic competition, offers a useful example. While one of the earliest editors of Gower's works, G.C. Macaulay, focuses on Gower's lack of understanding of Greek custom in his garbled portrayal of some sort of naked ball game, Gower's description of the game is not principally concerned with details about the game itself (which he clearly did not feel confident about) but with the game as an expression of local cultural custom (Peck 2006, 282n679):

> He [Apollonius] goth to se the toun aboute,
> And cam ther as he fond a route
> Of yonge lusti men withalle.
> And as it scholde tho befalle,
> That day was set of such assisse,
> That thei scholde in the londes guise,
> As he herde of the poeple seie,
> Here comun game thanne pleie;
> And crid was that thei scholden come
> Unto the gamen alle and some
> Of hem that ben delivere and wyhte,
> To do such maistrie as thei myhte.
> Thei made hem naked as thei scholde,
> For so that ilke game wolde,
> As it was tho custume and us,
> Amonges hem was no refus:
> (8.670-86)

The playing of the "commun game" is described as part of "the londes guise" ("the custom of the land") tied to an unspecified day of celebration ("that day was set of such assisse"; Peck 2006, 168). The only other detail provided about the game is that it is played naked, and Apollonius's consequent nakedness in order to take part is defended as a reflection of older and different customs: "as it was

tho [then] custume and us". For this reason, the reader is assured that Apollonius's nakedness "was no refus" ("was no disgrace"; Peck 2006, 168).

For Gower, the stakes of this episode lie not in showcasing the specifics of ancient Greek everyday life (specifics he did not have access to) but rather in demonstrating how narrative creates a space for acknowledging cultural difference. In presenting Apollonius as an exemplary figure, Gower goes out of his way to contextualise that exemplarity in terms of changing historical norms; naked princes might not be seen as acceptable in fourteenth-century England, but (Gower asserts) they certainly were acceptable in the world of Greek antiquity. In a sense, the elusive idea of the naked games becomes a kind of shorthand for Greek cultural difference; the poem revels in its ability to present that difference even if it cannot entirely explain it.

Gower as Guide: Staging Mediation in *Pericles*

At first glance, the episode of the games at Pentapolis might seem like a clear example of *Pericles*'s preference for medievalism over Hellenism. Departing from the *Confessio* (and the larger Apollonius narrative tradition) by excising naked gymnasium athletics entirely, Shakespeare and his collaborator opt to represent a thoroughly medieval vision of competition in the form of a tournament fought by knights in armour complete with squires, triumphs, and *impresa* (Archibald 1998, 72-5). Despite the tournament notionally taking place "in Greece", the scene's intense focus on armour particularly as an expression of identity gives the entire episode a distinctly medieval feel (5.104). Gone are Gower the author's attempts to represent – and defend – culturally alien forms of athletic practice, replaced by the representation of far more culturally familiar – and normative – forms of competition.

But while *Pericles* has indisputably reimagined the episode at Pentapolis in terms that would be more familiar to a Jacobean audience, I would propose that this reimagination still functions to make a Greek world legible. The introduction of the various knight-competitors by the King Simonides and his daughter, Thaisa, serves as a "live-action" catalogue of ancient Greek city-states (Sparta,

Macedon, Antioch, and so on) represented through the norms of the medieval tournament. As is customary, each knight presents himself to the king and his daughter, who in turn identify (and comment upon) the knights for the audience:

> ([*Flourish.*] *The first knight passes by* [*richly armed, and his page before him, bearing his device on his shield, delivers it to the Lady Thaisa*])
> SIMONIDES Who is the first that doth prefer himself?
> THAISA A knight of Sparta, my renownèd father,
> And the device he bears upon his shield
> Is a black Ethiope reaching at the sun.
> The word, *Lux tua vita mihi.*
> [*The page presents it to the king*]
> (6.17-20)

Indeed, as both spectators and narrators of the knights' introductions, Simonides and Thaisa take on a role similar to that of Gower the chorus. They are dramaturgically charged with making the scene legible for the audience, and thus function themselves as mediating figures for both the play's action and the knights' identities. Imperfect, culturally contaminated even, the knights of the tournament are nonetheless representatives (quite literally) of the Greek world, here put on display and made apprehensible for multiple audiences.

But practical dramaturgical concerns were surely also central to Shakespeare and his collaborator's choice to reconceptualise the episode in Pentapolis. Clearly, Gower and other medieval authors found the description of Greek gymnasium practices depicted in the Apollonius story confusing. Gower's version is especially muddled in its description, and he produces, as we have seen, a very general account of the competition focused more on cultural difference than on presenting logistical specifics. A poet, like Gower, can (by and large) get away with this; a dramatist, looking to stage this episode, cannot. Simply put, as a form of competition known to Jacobean audiences and one more-or-less 'stageable', the jousting tournament solves the problem of how to stage an ambiguous and poorly understood form of ancient competition. But the jousting tourney also adds a further dimension to this episode. Grounded in the ritualistic and performative context of medieval court culture,

the jousting tourney is a form of competition that is intrinsically 'presentational' – tournaments are as much about display as they are about martial competition. As such, the inclusion of the tourney – while ostensibly a departure from the narrative's Hellenism – intensifies the centrality of self-conscious mediation in the tradition of the Apollonius story. Like the figure of Gower as chorus, it functions as a way of seeing, a way of putting an elusive and hard-to-access Greek world on display. Through the grafting of medieval elements onto a Greek world, the tourney becomes a manifestation of how medieval forms of thought and knowledge organise access to Greek antiquity, even if that access is only partial.

But *Pericles* is not entirely devoid of the kind of overt attention to cultural difference seen in Gower's *Confessio*. At the opening of Act 4, as Gower muses on his own role as chorus in largely conventional terms, he draws attention to the play's negotiation of cultural difference (it is not clear why he slips out of the octosyllabic here):

> GOWER Thus time we waste and long leagues make short,
> Sail seas in cockles, have and wish but for't,
> Making to take our imagination
> From bourn to bourn, region to region.
> By you being pardoned, we commit no crime
> To use one language in each several clime
> Where our scenes seem to live. I do beseech you
> To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you
> The stages of our story . . .
> (18.1-9)

While Gower's apologies for truncating time and space are typical of chorus-speeches in Shakespeare (cf. *Henry V* and *A Winter's Tale*), his apology for effacing the multilingualism of this cross-cultural story is unusual.[5] It not only belies an attentiveness to the

5 Shakespeare and his collaborator do not seem entirely clear about the linguistic context of the ancient Greek Mediterranean. Though Gower the chorus is correct to imagine that the Hellenistic Mediterranean was a linguistically diverse place, the specific anxiety articulated in these lines regarding monolingualism does not seem to account for Greek's status as a *lingua franca*, a fact conveyed in the Apollonius story through the consistent use of Greek proper names in every distinct locale.

story as representing multiple non-English cultures, but it also suggests that cultural difference as a category is germane to the business of theatrical representation. If linguistic diversity is part and parcel of larger questions of dramaturgy, the theatre becomes explicitly linked (as it of course implicitly is) to acts of translation and cultural adaptation. Negotiating linguistic realism becomes as foundational to narrative adaptation as negotiating the passing time and the movement between different places.

Alongside this attentiveness to the fact of cultural difference, Gower vividly emphasises his own role as a dramaturgical and narratological intermediary. Unlike in the opening lines of the play, where Gower primarily understood his intermediary position in historical and hauntological terms, in these lines, Gower shifts his focus to the very architecture of dramatic narrative. In language far more direct than any speech by *Henry V*'s chorus, Gower defines the liminality of his own position by appealing to a language of "gaps": "I do beseech you / To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you / The stages of our story . . .". Editors have compared Gower's use of the word "gaps" to that of Time in *The Winter's Tale* (Warren in Shakespeare 2003, 189n5):

> TIME Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage that I slide
> O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom.
> (*WT* 4.1.4-9)

But the two uses of the word are, in fact, rather different. For Time, the "wide gap" refers more or less directly to the span of years ("o'er sixteen years") that separates act 3 from act 4. For Gower, the gaps in which he "stand[s]" seem to represent several different facets of the play's structural and narratological composition: gaps in time, yes, but also gaps in the play's geographic settings ("from bourn to bourn, region to region"), gaps between language traditions, even the gaps between scenes – "the stages of our story" – that lend the play its distinctly episodic structure (reflected in the choice by some editions, like the Oxford Shakespeare, to organise the play entirely

by scenes eschewing act divisions entirely). "The gaps", as Gower describes them, function as spatial extensions of his role as chorus, affirming the centrality of Gower's status as an intermediary, as, indeed, almost an expression of the state of 'inbetweenness'.

In imagining the gaps as the condition of possibility for his own status as chorus, Gower further differentiates his speech from that of Time. For Time, the "wide gap" is significant only in so much as it can be abbreviated and negated, Time does not so much operate within the gap as above and beyond it. In contrast, Gower sees his own powers of explication – here overtly described in pedagogical terms – as directly tied to the idea of the gaps: "I do beseech you / To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you / The stages of our story". The gaps are the spaces that allow for Gower to make the play legible, they are the *raison d'être* for this role as chorus. Unlike Time, then, who draws attention to the gap in order to erase it, Gower draws attention to the gaps in order to leave them visible. He stands in the gaps rather than seeking to close them. Gower embraces his own position in the middle.

I would like to conclude this essay by turning to a modern production of *Pericles* in which the power of the play's conceptual interest in "gaps" was made particularly vivid: a 1998 production of the play by the Washington Shakespeare Theater directed by Joe Banno (Gossett 2004, 98-9). In this production, which made use of a large warehouse space to set up no less than seven different stages, the audience moved between these stages as the play moved between its different locales. As the audience moved from location to location, Gower conducted them as a kind of tour guide, presumably delivering his explanatory monologues almost as if ushering a tour group through exhibitions at a museum. It is hard not to read this radical approach to staging *Pericles* as a literalization of Gower's self-description in the lines we have just been examining. In this production, Gower – and the audience – find themselves literally in the gaps between literal 'stages' of the story. Furthermore, in imagining Gower as a tour guide of sorts, the pedagogical function Gower ascribes to himself in these lines is also underscored: Gower does indeed "stand i'th'gaps to teach".

Emma Smith has suggested in her book *This Is Shakespeare*, that Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre is defined precisely by a fascination

with gaps, what she calls "the sheer and permissive gappiness of his drama" (2019, 2). For Smith, this "gappiness" exists precisely at the intersection between narrative and dramaturgy. In her estimation, it is between the things unsaid in the playtext and the things necessarily made explicit on the stage where interpretation happens; gaps become a privileged concept for understanding the very workings of Shakespearean drama itself. Perhaps, then, we might see Gower standing in the gaps as an inflection point of sorts for Shakespeare – and his collaborator's – understanding of the role of drama. As we have seen, the gaps in this play are myriad, not simply between time periods and settings, but also between the ancient Greek world the play seeks to represent and the medieval English source material in which that world was made available. And yet, rather than downplay this gap or try to efface it, the play puts it on display, indeed celebrates it as part of the power of dramatic narrative. And if we can see cultural reception and adaptation as not just an end result but as a story – as a process worthy of its own narrative adaptation – then perhaps *Pericles* succeeds more than we realise as a play about classical reception.

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