

Autumn No.3

Autumn Lectures 2016 for the Angel Foundation, by Peter Milward

No.3. Saturday October 29, at Parlor No.5, on *The Winter's Tale*

Today in contrast to *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, not so popular today,

here is a great play, now chosen for presentation by Sophia Sh Theatre, WT

Genre of tragi-comedy, obscured by editors of First Folio

with T at beginning, WT at end of comedies, Cym as tragedy, later Per.

Common aspect to three of them, Per, Cym, WT (not T), pointing to H8

while looking back to KL Act IV (happy ending, without V sad ending)

in Per. secret of Antiochus in Act I, king's wife = daughter

scandalous relation of H8 to Anne Boleyn, according to N Sander on English Schism

in Cym. British king under Romans refusing tribute under influence of new queen

with heroine Imogen = Princess Mary, Posthumus Leonatus = Reginald Pole

Now in WT, source Greene's *Pandosto*, inverting Sicilia and Bohemia

so as to make Sicilia (Trinacria) under H8 (Leontes) = England of H8

Bohemia under Polixenes = Catholic continent under Pope

Story of WT, first friendly relations between Leontes and Polixenes in Sicilia

till sudden jealousy of Leontes against wife Hermione, for friendship with Polixenes

= H8's rejection of Catharine for her allegiance to Rome (no second wife)

charging counsellor Camillo to poison Polixenes, but Camillo warns Pol. to escape

Leading up to trial of Hermione for adultery = trial of Catharine on validity of marriage

H appeals to oracle of Apollo at Delphos, allowed by Leontes as so sure of himself

= C appeal from court presided by 2 Cardinals to Pope in Rome

but H justified by oracle, Leontes condemned, son Mamillius dies, Leontes repents

Meanwhile baby daughter Perdita born to H in prison, rejected by Leontes

taken by Antigonus to shore of Bohemia, only to be pursued by Bear and killed

observed by old Shepherd and clownish son.

"Thou mettest with things dying, I with things new born"

Thus Perdita grows up in Bohemia as Shepherd's daughter over period of 16 years

introduced by Chorus Time, as "now grown in grace,/ Equal with wondering"

with emphasis on keyword of "grace", common to both Perdita and Hermione,

echoing continued theme in plays of heroine = Virgin Mary, Our Lady

Now in Act IV turning from preceding tragedy in Sicilia to comedy in Bohemia

(interestingly presented by TADC with English in Sic. Americans in Boh 1963,

copied by Sophia students in detail for their production later that year)

Now introduced by merry thief Autolycus, "snapper-up on unconsidered trifles" with song, "When daffodils begin to peer.../ For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale", on way to sheep-shearing feast (= Shakespeare?)

Centring on wooing of Perdita, as Flora, by Prince Florizel, son to Polixenes

Perdita distributes flowers among guests, reminiscent of Ophelia, including Polixenes, secretly come with Camillo

Florizel expresses his love for her, "What you do/ Still betters what is done.

When you speak, sweet,/ I'd have you do it ever. When you sing,/ I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,/ Pray so, and for the ordering of your affairs,/ To sing them, too. When you do dance, I wish you/ A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do/ Nothing but that, move still, still so,/ And own no other function."

But Polixenes suddenly reveals himself, charging his son with demeaning himself, stalks out, leaving Camillo with the couple, to suggest a plan. With a boat prepared for them to return to Sicilia, while he plans to pursue them with Polixenes, and so the movement of the play turns from Bohemia back to Sicilia

Back in Sicilia in Act V, Leontes welcomes them "As is the spring to the earth", not yet realizing the identity of Perdita, but speaking to Florizel,

"You have a holy father,/ A graceful gentleman, against whose person,/ So sacred as it is, I have done sin" = words applicable as from a repentant H8 to the Pope (echoing other words in Cym. Iachimo to Imogen concerning Posthumus)

Description off stage by gentlemen concerning revelation of all identities,

"They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed or one destroyed, a notable passion of wonder appeared in them... such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour... their joy waded in tears... If all the world could have seen it, the woe had been universal... Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born."

There remains final scene at the house of the noble Paulina, for the statue of Hermione, who seemed to have died, but was really kept in hiding by her lady in waiting, now shown as statue, the work of "that rare Italian master Julio Romano",

Paulina tells them, "It is required/ You do awake your faith," then to the statue, "Tis time, descend, be stone no more, approach.../ Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him/ Dear life redeems you," as a miracle of resurrection

(theme common to all tragi-comedies, following on joyful, sorrowful plays,

as if Shakespeare is observing in his plays the three mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

Cf. thesis of TS Eliot, *The Pattern in Shakespeare's Carpet* (BookWay, 2012)

Hermione speaks, "You gods, look down,/ And from your sacred vials pour your graces/ Upon my daughter's head."