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Shakespearean Chorus and Prologue: its functions and effects in the play

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Abstract:

The aim of this BA Thesis is to analyse and compare Shakespeare's prologues and choruses according to their formal features (narrative strategies, Chorus persona, and distribution in the play) and their position and function in the individual plays. The introductory chapter will briefly comment on the use of the chorus and prologue in Elizabethan drama, providing the context for subsequent specific analysis of Shakespeare's plays. The discussion will open with the analysis of the earliest of the containing this feature plays, *Romeo and Juliet*. This will provide a basis for categorising and documenting the development of the above characteristics, which will then be compared with other Shakespeare's prologues and choruses from all the genres of his plays. The other compared plays are *Henry VIII*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, and *Henry V*.

Abstrakt:

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat a porovnávat Shakespearovy prology a chóry vzhledem k jejich formálním znakům (vypravěčským postupům, postavě chóru a jejich rozmístění v textu hry) a jejich pozici a funkci v jednotlivých hrách. Úvodní kapitola se ve stručnosti zaměří na užití chóru a prologu v Alžbětinském dramatu, čímž bude poskytnut kontext pro následující specifický rozbor Shakespearových her. K otevření diskuse bude užitá analýza nejranější ze zahrnutých her, *Romeo a Julie*. Tím bude vytvořen základ pro kategorizaci a dokumentaci vývoje výše zmíněných charakteristik, které budou užívány k analyzování zbytku Shakespearových prologů a chórů všech žánrů jeho her. Dalšími porovnávanými hrami jsou *Jindřich VIII*, *Sen noci svatojánské*, *Troilus a Kressida*, *Perikles*, kníže Tyrský a *Jindřich V*.

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Introduction

From all the 671 plays surviving from the Renaissance era, as Bruster and Weimann claim, about forty percent employ a figure which mediates between the play and the audience¹ – a feature revived from the remains of the ancient theatrical tradition. This device was applied in various manners, lengths, and to differing purposes; and had enjoyed slightly fluctuating, but still constant popularity for more than one and a half century. Similar statistics apply to the work of the most renowned renaissance playwright, as almost a half of the plays of William Shakespeare, feature a figure of mediation. *Romeo and Juliet* for that matter, include his earliest documented instance of such mediator, from which the development of this form of an artistic device can be traced throughout his fruitful career.

This thesis is focused on the role and effects of this mediator in Shakespeare's plays. The occurrences of this device in discussion are those which are presented by a figure standing outside of the play itself (whether that character is specified in any matter or not), plays, in which one of the characters functions also as the mediator for the play they are a part of, are not analysed. The plays to be discussed are namely *The Life of King Henry V*, *The Life of King Henry VIII*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. In existing literature this mediators are generally accepted to have unique roles within the plays in which they are set and considered in that perspective². To an extent, this thesis will apply an identical approach, but it will also compare the individual cases in order to identify and to classify the unifying factors which connect the occurrences of this device and which appear and evolve during the author's career. The device can be seen to assume two different forms: a prologue and a chorus. Each of these forms will be analysed separately, because their formal features, their placement in the plays, as well as their effects in shaping the play, are different. The prologue, determined by its position as the opener of a play, has a limited reach within the play and mostly comments on the whole storyline or set the background for the story about to be performed. The chorus, in comparison, appears also in between acts and therefore usually only refers to the action in their immediate surrounding, shaping them and

¹ Douglas Bruster, and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama*. (London: Routledge, 2004) . p 13

² For example in G. P Jones' "Henry V: The Chorus and the Audience", Richard Hillman's, "Shakespeare's Gower and Gower's Shakespeare: The Larger Debt of Pericles", Hoeniger's "Gower and Shakespeare in Pericles" or Anthony Brennan's "That Whithin Which Passes Show: The Function of the Chorus in Henry V"

providing additional information for the audience. Both of these forms present mediation between the audience and the play, which comes from their earliest history.

This theatrical device first emerged approximately seven hundred years B.C., when the first chorus was used. In the Ancient Greek theatre, the Chorus was primarily connected to the genre of tragedy. By the scarce information that we are given, the performance of a tragedy originally only consisted of the author himself, later replaced by a chorus, reciting the story. An occasion at which the first tragedies were performed was allegedly “originally a contest of choruses held in honour of the god Dionysus.”³ The numbers of the people present in the chorus varied from twelve to fifty, they were hired by the local government, and they supposedly proclaimed or sung the lyrics in square formations, accompanying the recitation by dance or formation movement. In later stages of the classical theatre the chorus remained to represent the voice of morality and religion in the plays, both in tragedies and comedies, but ceased to provide the sole content of the play. It also stepped in as the ideal public opinion, and as Roscoe states, “the chorus takes on the voice of the citizens, acting as a kind of focus in which the different members of the audience are represented and united”⁴, or as Longo claims, the chorus was “appealing to the collective's inherited store of opinions, consolidated and crystallized at the religious level.”⁵ . However, apart from the moralising and social aspects, the chorus also had a formal function in a play – in later stages of classical theatre in which actors presented the main part of a play, it also provided the audience with information which was hard to communicate through the characters, additional information about the background of the story (occurrences outside the traditionally limited time and space) or internal monologues of the characters. In *Prometheus Bound* by Sophocles, to serve as an example, the audience is given a chorus which communicates directly with the main character, comments briefly on the religious aspect of the story, portrays the scene in fascinating details – unrepresentable in the highly stylised performance of the Greek theatre, and states the expected emotional reaction of then audience:

³ Brett Roscoe. “On reading Renaissance closet drama: a reconsideration of the chorus in Fulke Greville's *Alaham and Mustapha*”. *Studies in Philology* (110:4) 2013, p 762-88.

⁴ Roscoe 765

⁵ Longo, O. "The Theater of the Polis," *Nothing to do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*. ed. Winkler, J and Zeitlin, F, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). p 17.

Prometheus, I am gazing on thee now!
With the cold breath of fear upon my brow,
Not without mist of dimming tears,
While to my sight thy giant stature rears
Its bulk forpined upon these savage rocks
In shameful bonds the linked adamant locks.
For now new steersmen take the helm
Olympian; now with little thought
Of right, on strange, new laws Zeus stablisheth his realm,
Bringing the mighty ones of old to naught.⁶

The persona of the chorus, as it is introduced in this example, stands in many ways in a completely different position than the one which would be expected of an Elizabethan chorus. It is not separated from the play and it interacts with the characters in the play, which in Elizabethan drama could only occur only when the functions of the chorus were delegated on a character of the play. It also appears in a very different relation to the structure of the play - not functioning only as an introduction or as connection between acts, as would be anticipated later, but strategically co-operating with the rest of the play. Although the ancient chorus presents a partially different theatrical feature, it is an elaborate artistic device, with multiple purposes and uses.

All this tradition, however, was originally forgotten with the fall of the ancient Roman civilisation, and the theatre in England began to develop anew. In Shakespeare's time, the face of the English theatre was quickly evolving, with the first theatre houses appearing around London, but it had already been through a period of evolution which cannot be overlooked. The medieval English theatre had developed a variety of theatrical devices on its own, and the predecessors of Shakespearean plays were medieval Mystery plays and Morality plays, which frequently focused on Christianity and Biblical themes as well as moral allegories. These plays, performed by traveling companies at courtyards and inns, used abstract allegorical figures and common stock-characters with revealing names based on the character's characteristic trait or vice. Characters presented were typically one-dimensional and undergone minimal development within the frame of the story. Because of their commonly known stories, simple plots, and clear symbolism; these plays employed

⁶ Aeschylus, "Prometheus Bound", Aeschylus: The Complete Works. (London: Centaur Editions, 2015). p 127

no mediator figure, and could even operate short passages without lines. This is observable in one of the theatrical means used by these plays - a dumb show – a mimed part of the play which was still occasionally used by Shakespeare's contemporary colleagues, for example by Thomas Kid in his *Spanish Tragedy*. It kept on being used even by Shakespeare himself in his plays *Hamlet* and *Pericles*, in case of *Pericles* it was even involved in the chorus.

In Renaissance the form of plays had changed and genres such as tragedy and comedy emerged, inspired by the ancient tradition, as mediated by texts such as Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Throughout the Renaissance society, aspects of the ancient cultures were revived in various ways - in architecture, visual arts, literature and even education. In the sphere of theatre, the most prominent influence were the new genres, shift of focus from generalising allegorical stories or Biblical tales towards unique stories of various characters in which a moral message would often be included but not central⁷; the partial attempt to respect the unities of time and space, and of course the revival of the chorus, was not only a classical tradition, but also a means for guiding the audience through new, more elaborate, plays. In renaissance this mediator figure was used in an innovated form but for the similar purposes as in the Ancient Greece, and occasionally combined with medieval theatrical devices, such as the dumb show. The form of a large rehearsed crowd was replaced by a single person reciting the text, either an actor or the head of the theatre; representing the communication between the performance presented and the audience; or a character persona chosen for specific purposes. While the presentation of the chorus was minimalised, the purposes it carried had been expanded, and as Bruster and Weimann state, it functioned as both "a literary form and a theatrical practice"⁸. Authors would use it not only as a communication device meant to transfer information to the audience, it would set atmosphere and expectations for the audience, and it would apologize for the theatre and the playwright. The person of the choir was most frequently used to present a prologue or epilogue to a play, and only more rarely in the more involved manner of the chorus. As Bruster and Weimann further add, the pre-Shakespearean prologues were figures of authority, "representatives commissioned to

⁷ Jaroslav Hornát, *Alžbětinské drama*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1986. p 8-35

⁸ Bruster and Weimann 17

speak for the theatre in general but for the dramatist in particular”⁹, initially also representing the relationship of dependence and obedience of the theatre to the royalty.¹⁰

Both of these forms, the prologue and the chorus, were in Shakespeare’s time presented either by a persona standing outside of the play, an anonymous figure, like in Christopher Marlowe’s prologue for *Doctor Faustus*, or character excluded from the play, like in Shakespeare’s *Pericles*; or by one of the characters commenting on the play in a form of a monologue and addressing the audience.

These effects as well as formal features of Shakespeare’s prologues and choruses will be studied in the following chapters of this thesis.

⁹ Bruster and Weimann 12

¹⁰ This relationship between the Elizabethan theatre and the court, as well as the function of the prologue as a mediator between the dramatist, his actors, his characters and their audience, is portrayed remarkably by the beginnings of the two versions of prologue for *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe. While the prologue intended for the court talks about the qualities of the play, praising it as “being thought second to none” when it was first written “Many yeares agoe”, and begins by addressing the audience as “*Gracious and Great*”, the prologue created for the more common audience is not by far so concerned with promotion of the play and courtesy towards the audience, but mostly prepares the ground for the story by describing the main protagonist.

Romeo and Juliet: the first appearance of a mediator

In one of Shakespeare's most popular tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet*, the figure of a mediator appears twice, at the very opening of the play and at the beginning of the second act. In both situations it is presented by an anonymous character speaking with the authority of a spokesman for the theatre, who comments both on the story of the play and on the performance, while directly addressing the audience. Although the persona of the mediator and the form of its utterance remains identical in both instances, the tone and focus do shift.

The most prominent and prevailing characteristics of the mediator's oration is the form – an English sonnet. The whole utterance is in both instances written into the form of 14 lines and alternate rhyme scheme with a final couplet. This form, evoking the renaissance sonnets which in their majority have romantic love as their motif, seems to be fitting the romantic tragedy thematically. The sonnet themes appear used by the characters, for example lady Capulet uses a form similar to contemporary blazons while describing Juliet's suitor, matching the features of a book to those of the young man in the effort to highlight his qualities (*Romeo and Juliet*, I,iii, 75-82). Furthermore, the very sonnet form appears again in the first dialogue between the protagonists in the fifth scene of the first act with the rhyme-scheme units primarily enclosed in the utterance of one character:

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. (*Romeo and Juliet*, I,v,92- 96)

Progressively the rhymes are split between the speeches of the two characters, creating for the listener a sense of connection and harmony between the two characters. The two lines of the final couplet, traditionally containing the change of argument, in this case advancement from words to deeds, are each spoken by one character:” (Jul.) Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake./ (Rom) Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.” (*Romeo and Juliet* I,v, 104-105)

In the orations of the mediator, the sonnet scheme is also kept rather carefully. In its opening utterance, the mediator uses the final couplet to turn the focus from the story of the play, which he pursues in the preceding passage, to the audience. The turn of topics develops from the twelfth line:” Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;/The which if you with patient ears attend,/What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.” (*Romeo and Juliet* I,i,12-14) In these three lines, when the focal point is turned from the theatre to the people in the auditorium, and the mediator persona wholly positions itself among the theatre company, we can see a formal apology.

In the second instance, the form and the content combine in a similar, but less apparent manner. As the focus of the second utterance of the mediator is again the story, in this case, the focus shifts from happenings passed, towards the expectations of the things to follow, creating a sense of anticipation: “But passion lends them power, time means, to meet/Tempering extremities with extreme sweet.” (*Romeo and Juliet* II,i,13-14) Considering the structure of the rhyme-scheme units, the form of these orations can be called identical. Their contents, however, are widely different under a closer examination.

Although both of the performances of the mediator are concerned with the story, each time it is addressed from a different perspective. In the opening part of the play, the mediator paves the way for the story, first portraying the setting:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. (*Romeo and Juliet* I,i,1-4)

The information presented in the initial four lines is reflected in the action following immediately after the end of mediator's speech and firmly ground the social situation which is to be the main motive for the play. In the following verses, however, the mediator persona discloses the events about to unfold in the play to the audience, together with their cause and outcome.

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife. (*Romeo and Juliet* I,i,5-8)

These lines are specific enough for the audience to roughly expect the outcome of the play in its later acts, but do not contain enough information for the audience to guess the manner in which the situation might unfold, allowing the author to play with expectations. In the initial act, therefore, this creates a sense of false expectations when the audience is pre-informed about a couple of star-crossed lovers, and is then presented the main character in an unrequited romantic relationship. In this manner the revealed information might function to stir up the interest of the audience. The expectations created by the grim opening also strongly contrast with the rather comedic character of the first act.

The second act, however, is opened by lines much more fitting to the tone of the following scenes. The opening oration in its beginning considers the story much more closely, commenting on the very beginning of the play:

Now old desire doth in his death-bed lie,
And young affection gapes to be his heir;
That fair for which love groan'd for and would die,
With tender Juliet match'd, is now not fair. (*Romeo and Juliet* II,i,1-4)

It highlights for the audience the fact that one love involvement had ended, praising the qualities of Romeo's new love interest in comparison to his preceding one. It seems that in the third and fourth line, the mediator is either accentuating the intensity of the love-bond using the dramatic description, or mocking his fickleness and ability to dispose of allegedly strong emotions within hours.

Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,
Alike betwitched by the charm of looks,
But to his foe supposed he must complain,
And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks: (*Romeo and Juliet*, II,i,5-8)

In these lines, the audience is reminded both of the mutuality of the new love affair, and of the situation in which the whole story is enclosed. Tension is built in the following four lines, which mostly emphasize the tragic aspect of the presented love affair:

Being held a foe, he may not have access
To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear;
And she as much in love, her means much less
To meet her new-beloved any where: (*Romeo and Juliet*, II,i,9-12)

Accentuating the threat the lovers face this passage creates ambience for the dramatic final couplet, which turns the attention of the audience towards the following acts with an open ending: “But passion lends them power, time means, to meet/ Tempering extremities with extreme sweet.”(*Romeo and Juliet*, II,i,13-14)

The audience is told that the lovers are to meet again, which is the subject of the act which immediately follows, but not informed of any further details of the meeting. This oration therefore does speak in a much greater detail about the story, but only includes the part of the story, which preceded it and should closely follow. It creates expectations in the audience but only again concerning the closest surrounding. It does not formally speak for the theatre in any means, commenting only on the story from the focal point of an omniscient narrator. Neither does it address the audience, like in the opening part of the play.

Considering all these characteristics, it can be concluded, that what we find in *Romeo and Juliet* are the first documented instances of a prologue and a chorus in Shakespeare’s work. Although their formal features are highly unusual, their content, functions and the mediator persona do fulfil the categories:

The first passage presented by the mediator fits the criteria for a prologue by its position in the very beginning of the performance and by its content. The content appears to an extent similar to what was previously pointed out in Marlowe’s prologue to *The Jew of Malta* – addressing the audience with courtesy, making a formal apology for the theatre while speaking in its representation and promoting the play. In its portrayal of the play it addresses the whole story – from the origin roots of the tragedy presented to the final outcome – another frequent feature of contemporary prologues.

The second passage then can be called the first emergence of chorus. Although this is only one instance and choruses traditionally guide the audience throughout the play, the position of the chorus is here fulfilled by its function in separating the slightly comedic opening act of the play, from the tragedy which unfolds from the second act onward. It furthermore fulfils the requirements for a chorus by its reach - commenting only on the previous and following act.

Shakespeare's prologues: Midsummer Night's Dream, Troilus and Cressida, and Henry VIII

Having identified and analysed the first prologue in Shakespeare's work, we will now proceed to discuss each prologue presented by a character standing outside of the play they are introducing, focusing especially on the aspects highlighted in the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*. These aspects are the position and form of the prologue, the persona presenting it who is addressing the audience with courtesy, making a formal apology for the theatre and speaking in its representation, while also promoting the play and commenting on its contents (surroundings, plot and characters).

This list of important components can be supported by an instance of parodic prologue in the opening of the play within a play in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. As the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* states, parody is commonly used to ridicule stylistic habits by exaggeration¹¹. Therefore the parody of a prologue created by Shakespeare, accentuates what the author perceived as the important and prominent features of the subject parodied – prologues of the Elizabethan Era. The first aspect of prologues to be highlighted, in the speech of the character Quince in the role of the prologue, is the formal apology of the prologue and its courtesy towards the noble viewers:

Prologue

If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,

But with good will. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to contest you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here. That you should here repent you,

The actors are at hand and by their show

You shall know all that you are like to know. (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, V,i, 103-112)

¹¹ Dobson, Michael, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2003)

The comical effect of these lines does not only come from the character's confused usage of punctuation, it also draws from the audience's knowledge of what kind of polite addresses and courtesy a prologue should contain. Their breach by the ineptitude of the character, mostly while facing such noble viewers as are the characters of the royal couple and their court, creates a strong comical effect. The character continues to instruct the audience and present the basic information about the play.

Prologue

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, V,i, 122-129)

The first two lines serve as a direct instruction to the audience and are followed by an almost practical list of information as specifying who is presenting what and whom. In this part of his utterance, Quince uses the role of a prologue to fill in the information which might not be clear to the viewers, while hinting on the principles of theatre and theatricality by explaining the representations used and asking the audience to keep them in mind. As the informative part of his speech draws to its end it progressively changes into a narration of the story:

At the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain. (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, V,i, 124-142)

Similarly to *Romeo and Juliet*, which was first performed only approximately two years before the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, also here the prologue discloses the tragic ending of the play in its very opening. But being a parody, the prologue here leaves no space left for imagination or dramatic irony within the following scenes and gives the story out with every detail, denying its own instruction for the audience to “wonder on”.

As for the form, the previously presented form of prologue in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is hinted at. The majority of the lines are delivered in alternate rhyme, followed by isolated couplets and odd lines. The couplets are again used to mark changes in the presented argument, either turning from the audience to the actors, from the characters to the story, or closing the speech. This rhyme scheme and its usage creates an effect similar to that of a sonnet, but the sonnet scheme is never truly kept, which seems to be due to the fact that the sonnet is created to be imperfect

In conclusion, the characteristics highlighted by Shakespeare himself do correspond with the aforementioned ones –the formal apology, the mediation between the play, the company, and the audience, representation of the theatre, addressing theatricality, and commenting on the story all presented by an outsider figure speaking before the opening scene of the play. Prologues in both *Life of King Henry VIII* and *Troilus and Cressida* are both placed at the beginning of the plays and presented by such an anonymous mediator figure, but contain the rest of the features used to various extents.

Troilus and Cressida is the next play following *Romeo and Juliet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* featuring a prologue. Analogously to *Romeo and Juliet* it begins by stating the location of the story and its background. In comparison to *Romeo and Juliet*, however, the portrayal is far more detailed and elaborate, including individual scenes and characters:

In Troy, there lies the scene. From isles of Greece
 The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,
 Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,
 Fraught with the ministers and instruments
 Of cruel war: sixty and nine, that wore
 Their crownets regal, from the Athenian bay
 Put forth toward Phrygia; and their vow is made
 To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures
 The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen,
 With wanton Paris sleeps; and that's the quarrel. (*Troilus and Cressida*, I,i,1-10)

In another contrast to *Romeo and Juliet* where the audience is informed about a prevailing enmity, but not given any information about its origins, here the story of the conflict is elaborately narrated, emphasizing the political dimension leading to the subjects story of the play, which differentiate it from the domestic tragedy like *Romeo and Juliet*. This strong grounding of the play may be also accounted to the fact, that its subject matter is derived from a well-known story of Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey*. Despite the images war and war preparations he crates, the author also uses the heavy, archaic language to add importance and a serious tone to the introduction.

To Tenedos they come;
 And the deep-drawing barks do there disgorge
 Their warlike fraughtage: now on Dardan plains
 The fresh and yet unbruised Greeks do pitch
 Their brave pavilions: Priam's six-gated city,
 Dardan, and Tymbria, Helias, Chetas, Troien,
 And Antenorides, with massy staples
 And corresponsive and fulfilling bolts,
 Sperr up the sons of Troy. (*Troilus and Cressida*, I,i, 9-17)

The generous portrayal of the war preparations bestows a sense of importance and greatness on the whole story to be shown. The story, however, starts in the middle of the happening, as the prologue explains while speaking for “his author” in the by far most interesting lines of this prologue:

Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits,
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,
Sets all on hazard: and hither am I come
A prologue arm'd, but not in confidence
Of author's pen or actor's voice, but suited
In like conditions as our argument,
To tell you, fair beholders, that our play
Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils,
Beginning in the middle, starting thence away
To what may be digested in a play.
Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are:
Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war. (*Troilus and Cressida*, I,i,9-17)

Similarly to the final couplet in *Romeo and Juliet*, the final lines of this prologue offer a change in focus from the story towards the theatre and the audience. As the topic changes, so does the language, which seems to leave behind the archaic tone while speaking for the theatre and not for the story or characters. For the first time we are given a self-conscious prologue, who is explaining his own presence in the play and refers to the author, and who presents his own position as being at the mercy of the audience, equally as the play is. The persona here addresses the audience directly as “fair beholders” and after a flowery description provides a practical, but also stylistic reason for the chosen timing of the scenes within the bigger story.

In the context of the whole play, the grand introduction creates expectations which the action does not satisfy. This, however, seems to fit a greater scheme. Kenneth Palmer claims the play to be a satire of unfulfilled anticipation in which “heroes appear unheroic, lovers are absurd and policy grows into ill opinion”.¹²

The form of this prologue differs sharply from the previous ones. It is completely presented in blank verse, which gives it a less restricted order. This strictness is however compensated by the heavy archaic language used for the entire part of the prologue concerned with the story.

¹²Shakespeare, William, and Kenneth Palmer. *Troilus And Cressida*. (London: Routledge, 1991). p 83

More than ten years later performed, *Henry VIII* is entirely different in the usage of the same methods of opening the play. Most of the differences, however, can be attributed to the topic of the play. The form of the heroic couplet for example, contrasting to the blank verse used in *Troilus and Cressida*. does have two possible justifications. Primarily, as a stylistic device, it surrounds the play in atmosphere of a heroic poetry, a ballad of old, strengthening the importance and serious tone of the matter to be presented, secondarily, as a trend-influenced aspect (when the play was originally performed, the tight rhyme scheme was regaining its popularity).

I come no more to make you laugh: things now,
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present. (*Henry VIII*, I,i,1-5)

The persona of the mediator is here very open about being a part of the theatre and about its role. As the Shakespearean prologues evolve, after the self-conscious prologue in *Troilus and Cressida* we are given a persona of mediator who is not only aware of its function and position (in the play as well as in the theatre), but also of its other appearances. The manner in which the prologue addresses the audience is here the most direct and even instructing:

Those that can pity, here
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
The subject will deserve it. Such as give
Their money out of hope they may believe,
May here find truth too. Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass, if they be still and willing,
I'll undertake may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours. (*Henry VIII*, I,i,5-13)

The prologue here does distinguish groups of viewers by their expectations and reacts to them separately. It exercises a great deal of authority in comparison to the previous prologues, who were at the mercy of the audience or “arm'd... /In like conditions as our argument” (*Troilus and Cressida*, I,i). With his new authority, the mediator is promoting

the theatre and promising that the money spent will be worth the show to come. The real formal apology, however, comes only later:

Only they

That come to hear a merry bawdy play,
A noise of targets, or to see a fellow
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow,
Will be deceived; for, gentle hearers, know,
To rank our chosen truth with such a show
As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting
Our own brains, and the opinion that we bring,
To make that only true we now intend,
Will leave us never an understanding friend. (*Henry VIII*, I,i,13-22)

Here the audience is almost factually informed what not to expect to see in the play. The prologue offers explanation why “fool and fight” is not to be present – the matter and the “truth” presented is too serious for such distractions. This extreme seriousness and the manner in which the play is introduced may very well be explained by the context – it is the most recent topic in Shakespeare’s repertoire and in the time of its first performances its contents were still in vivid memory of his audience. This also seems to be the reason for the absence of any specific information about the location of the story or about its characters. The only information we receive about the characters and their story, except for it being extremely serious, comes in the final lines of this prologue:

Therefore, for goodness' sake, and as you are known
The first and happiest hearers of the town,
Be sad, as we would make ye: think ye see
The very persons of our noble story
As they were living; think you see them great,
And follow'd with the general throng and sweat
Of thousand friends; then in a moment, see
How soon this mightiness meets misery:
And, if you can be merry then, I'll say
A man may weep upon his wedding-day. (*Henry VIII*, I,i,23-32)

Here the prologue furthermore points his attention to the audience and with the tone of great intensity guides them in the way they are to perceive the story. They are instructed to see the characters “As they were living” and watch as their greatness turns to misery – the only reference to the actual storyline of the play. This information, however, foreshadows a great deal of the play, which consists for a great part of the stories of “three great victims”, as A. R. Humphreys states, who “fall in turn with moving and dignified resignation.”¹³ Therefore in this case the prologue creates the appropriate expectations for the majority of the play, but does not go as far as the prologue in *Romeo and Juliet* – the ending of the play is not mentioned.

The last prologue of Shakespeare’s career shows the evolution of his employment of mediator figures addressing the audience. The addresses present are progressively more appealing to the audience and also capable to communicate not only the basic information about the play and a formal apology, but also the reasons for the arrangement of the play and author’s intentions. The formal feature of the form is used to accentuate the atmosphere of the play, which is created by either grounding the story in its origins and location or by foreshadowing its outcome.

¹³ Shakespeare, William, and Arthur Raleigh Humphreys. *King Henry The Eight*. (London: Penguin Books, 1971). p 13

Pericles, Prince of Tyre: chorus with a persona

Pericles, Prince of Tyre is generally accepted as one of Shakespeare's later plays, although whether Shakespeare is the only author or a co-author of the play is often disputed. It was first presented in 1609, and it is the first play of a new genre in his repertoire - his first romance. In comparison to other plays it covers much longer time and much greater variety of places, and which might be the reason why it employs the chorus, introducing each act, to bridge time and space distances. In *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, the persona is no longer anonymous. In this instance, Shakespeare summoned a memory of a well-known poet to guide the audience through an unusually extensive story. The character used in the play's chorus is that of John Gower, a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer. In the first act therefore, Gower introduces not only the play, but also himself:

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. (*Pericles*, I,i,1-4)

In the beginning of the first chorus, Gower places a great emphasis on the venerability of both the narrator and the story itself. Gower, calling himself "ancient", comes to talk about a tale which is old even to him. He promotes it by claiming it had once been very popular among nobles of old, who knew its restorative power. He accentuates the quality ancientness of by making a remark in Latin which can be roughly translated as "a good thing becomes better with age." This seems to be employed in order, to give both the play and the chorus additional authority. From this position, the chorus addresses the audience:

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. (*Pericles* I,i,11-16)

In the second appearance of the chorus, Gower does what has been used before in the second appearance of the mediator in *Romeo and Juliet*. He begins the chorus with a commentary on the previous act and continues steadily to presume what is to come later:

Here have you seen a mighty king
His child, I wis, to incest bring;
A better prince and bening lord,
That will prove awful both in deed and word. (*Pericles* II,i, 1-4)

In these lines provided by Gower, he seems to be talking from the position of authority (which is slightly contradictory to his obedience towards the audience in the first act) commenting also on the moral side of the story:

I'll show you those in troubles reign,
Losing a mite a mountain gain.
The good in conversation,
To whom I give my benison, is still at Tarsus, (*Pericles* II,i,7-10)

The character of Gower is well aware of his function as the guide of the audience and openly speaks about it. He almost seems to take the position of a guide a step further and become the one who decides what the audience will be shown. From his authoritative position he gives his opinions on the behaviour expected of the audience, on the story, and on the characters.

After another short reminder about the events of the first act, he turns the attention of the audience towards a new feature which follows these lines, the dumb-show. It is said to be a remnant of the old morality plays¹⁴, therefore the usage of this component suits well with Gower's background. In the dumb-show, a mimed part of the play, a messenger brings Pericles a letter and is knighted before leaving. The contents of the letter are only explained later by Gower, but not in a straight or direct manner. The narrator is playing with the patience of the audience, who, knowing that something important must have been written in the letter, are only given a moralising description of a life of a character met in the first act. Although the explanation about the origin of the letter is doubtlessly necessary, it does truly seem that Gower is using his authority and space to include what he

¹⁴ Dobson, Michael, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2003

perceives as important. The content of the letter follows only after 6 lines, and then is explained in two short couplets:

How Thaliard came full bent with sin
And had intent to murder him;
And that in Tarsus was not best
Longer for him to make his rest. (*Pericles*, II,i, 24-27)

Gower here presents in four lines a part of story which would otherwise need at least one scene to itself or dialogue between characters, which would explain why Pericles left the Kingdom so suddenly. The departure and following journey are also described, but in a different manner. The chorus does provide information, presenting scenes which are not acted out in the play, this time not because of the of the time limitation of the play, but because of the limited possibilities of the stage:

He, doing so, put forth to seas,
where when men been, there's seldom ease;
for now the wind begins to blow
thunder above and deep below
make such unquiet that the ship
should house him safe is wreck'd and split;
and he, good prince, having all lost,
by waves from coast to coast is tost (*Pericles*, II,i, 28-35)

A notable change here is, that the chorus gives account of the events, but also provides a dramatic recounting of the happenings, with a great deal of details. To provide even more of a thrilling narration, Gower switches speech from past tense to present (a frequently used stylistic method which tends to add a sense of immediacy to the text passage). The strength of the passage is further supported by alliterations (begins to blow) – method of emphasis which was already used in literary works as old the English heroic poetry. Therefore their usage might not only emphasize the dramatic aspects of the narration, but also fit the ancient tone of the whole play.

The final lines of the chorus emphasize the immediacy even further. It feels almost as if Gower was hurrying to leave the stage not to collide with Pericles “and here he comes. What shall be next, /pardon old Gower, - this longs the text.” (*Pericles*, II,i,41-42) Again

the events in the third act follows directly his narration, and straight after Gower's prologue ends, the character of Pericles appears and speaks in a monologue.

The third and most extensive chorus seems to combine three distinct parts. The first one is again given partly in the present tense, but this time it does not create a dramatic effect. It rather serves to depict a calm night after a wedding - as if slowing down the fast-moving play for a moment of peace, with small details to illustrating the atmosphere. The passage focusing on the conception of the baby during the wedding night is again strongly moralising, by focusing on the virginity of the bride. In the end of this passage another dumb-show is presented by a simple line "What's dumb in show I'll plain with speech."

Within the dumb-show Pericles receives another message and by the reactions of everyone present, the audience is informed that the news have to be positive. Again the explanation is postponed for nine lines in which Gower explains the difficulties involved in delivering the letter. In the following revelation the story is moved through many scenes which would prolong the play. The narration is enlivened by a short mediated direct speech.

A final part of the chorus is another vivid narration, repeating the present tense strategy. It even involves a mediated question illustrating the preparations for the journey. While the chorus moves the story even more forward, he also announces the importance of audience's co-operation:

And what ensues in this fell storm
Shall for itself itself perform.
I will relate, action may
Conveniently the rest convey;
Which might not what by me is told.
In your imagination hold
This stage the ship, upon whose deck
The sea-tost Pericles appears to speak. (*Pericles*, III,i,53-60)

In these final eight lines of the third prologue Gower instructs the audience about what they ought to imagine. He also creates a very fluent transition from the narration into action, while talking about the two methods briefly and explains why one or the other is used. Immediate action in the first scene of the third act follows his introduction and confirms his words.

Imagine Pericles arrived at Tyre,
Welcomed and settled to his own desire.
His woeful queen we leave at Ephesus,
Unto Diana there a votaress.
Now to Marina bend your mind,
Whom our fast-growing scene must find (*Pericles*, IV,i,1-6)

In the opening of the chorus introducing the fourth act, Gower navigates the audience to recall the situations and whereabouts of all the main characters, going from place to place in the space of a few lines. This chorus is almost plainly used to move the story forward in a high speed, moving over years. He stops his pace in a moment when Marina's life hangs on a thread – a dramatic but also easily performable situation. He departs with another remark about his own function and means (his couplets and his ability to bridge the time and space within the play) as well as about the function of the audience's co-operation:

The unborn event
I do commend to your content:
Only I carry winged time
Post on the lame feet of my rhyme;
Which never could I so convey,
Unless your thoughts went on my way.
Dionyza does appear,
With Leonine, a murderer. (*Pericles*, VI,i, 45-52)

The next appearance of the chorus is placed in a very unusual context, as Gower comes to move the story again. He apologizes for the manner in which the story is presented:

Thus time we waste, and longest leagues make short;
Sail seas in cockles, have an wish but for't;
Making, to take your imagination,
From bourn to bourn, region to region.
By you being pardon'd, 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' the gaps to teach you,
The stages of our story. (*Pericles*, IV,iii,1-9)

After these initial lines with an apology, the chorus is used solely to narrate the story. The narration is only interspersed by another dumb-show, after which Gower, in his own words “reconcile the ears to the eyes” (*Pericles*, IV,iii,22) of the audience. The final part of the chorus is concerned with Marina’s epitaph, which is followed by Gower’s short moralising remark condemning flattery – “No visor does become black villany/So well as soft and tender flattery.” (*Pericles*, IV,iii,47-48).

Let Pericles believe his daughter's dead,
And bear his courses to be ordered
By Lady Fortune; while our scene must play
His daughter's woe and heavy well-a-day
In her unholy service. Patience, then,
And think you now are all in Mytilene. (IV,iii,47-52)

The chorus in the opening of the fifth act is the shortest appearance of Gower in the play so far. Gower points the attention of the audience first to Marina, whose unearthly abilities are surely better presented through the imagination of the audience than by actor’s action. Then he asks the audience to place Marina where he described her and turn their attention to Pericles instead. In this narrative manner, he brings the two characters together and ends his speech with yet another very direct instruction to the audience:

In your supposing once more put your sight
Of heavy Pericles; think this his bark:
Where what is done in action, more, if might,
Shall be discover'd; please you, sit and hark. (*Pericles*, V,i,21-24)

One more thing which can be derived from these lines, except for the very open explanation of the manner in which theatre works, is that Gower for this part abandons the strict couplets for a more relaxed alternate rhyme.

The chorus appears again in the middle of the fifth act to give another short speech. To communicate another turn of events, Gower returns to his previous couplets. He points to the fact that the play is coming to an end and so is his appearance. He also asks the audience to allow him the speech, returning once more to the deferential tone of his first appearance. After this opening, he proceeds to narrate another part of the story.

This, my last boon, give me,
For such kindness must relieve me,
That you aptly will suppose
What pageantry, what feats, what shows,
What minstrelsy, and pretty din,
The regent made in Mytilene
To greet the king. So he thrived,
That he is promised to be wived (*Pericles*, V,ii,3-8)

When Gower appears for the last time, closing the play with his recapitulation, he employs a greater deal of moralising sentences than before:

In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard
Of monstrous lust the due and just reward:
In *Pericles*, his queen and daughter, seen,
Although assail'd with fortune fierce and keen,
Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown'd with joy at last:
In Helicanus may you well descry
A figure of truth, of faith, of loyalty: (*Pericles*, V,v,1-8)

Now that Gower has no obligation to narrate or to move the story further, he closes it with a moral lesson. He analyses all important characters for what they represented, almost reflecting the old morality plays in which each character impersonated a flaw or a virtue. He therefore again emphasizes the antiquity of the play and of himself and seals the ancient atmosphere.

In retrospect, the most prominent features are partly the ones which were already identified in the prologues: the speaker persona's position outside the play; its direct speeches towards the audience, whether to communicate an apology or to instruct them; its commentary on the story and its background. Here, however, many of these aspects are used to a different extent and other uses of the mediator persona are added, namely its function in moving the story forward, bridging time and space gaps between acts and scenes; its function in setting atmosphere before each act.

A completely new aspect of the chorus in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, is the specific identity of the chorus persona. The character of Gower, the “sustained literary allusion”¹⁵, as Hillman calls it, carries many functions throughout the play and gives it many unique aspects. The major influence of this character is the authority he presents, because John Gower would have been known to the Elizabethan audience very well as a contemporary author of Geoffrey Chaucer and a respector poet. The character uses this authority in his speeches towards the audience in order to instruct their understanding of the play and the ways of their imagination. As Hoeniger states, he “speaks with the conviction of a poet who is accustomed to be listened to with rapt attention.”¹⁶ Therefore he lends his ancient approval a new form of play in the author’s repertoire, and helps Shakespeare go beyond the usual limitations of his plays.

Both the form and the content of Gower’s speeches are consistent with the work of the author during his lifetime and with his reputation. The form in which he speaks most of the time – heroic couplets- is the form in which John Gower wrote his poetry in the fourteenth century, and this form is broken only in the chorus to the fifth act. The aspects which are added by the presence of Gower – the moralising parts – are consistent with his reputation as the “moral Gower”, which was a name Geoffrey Chaucer once called him and which stuck with him for centuries. As Hoeniger puts it, "Gower returns again and again to narrate pieces of the story mixed with moral commentary.”¹⁷ This authority is provided by his position in the play and by the authority which comes with the identity of a famous poet, which this prologue uses. Gower’s voice seems to resonate even in parts of the play, where other characters (Pericles in particular) switch from blank verse into couplets for short moral remarks¹⁸. This confirms Gower’s claim that he shows the story to the audience, almost managing the play, therefore exceeding the reach and limitations of a chorus as a mere commentator.

The prologue related aspects of the chorus are in general present here in a more prominent manner. The addressing of the audience in Gower’s rendering seems to have two faces. He is very servile while speaking for the theatre, mostly in the first act and the last. But he is

¹⁵ Richard Hillman, “Shakespeare's Gower and Gower's Shakespeare: The Larger Debt of *Pericles*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36 (1985). p 427

¹⁶ F. David Hoeniger, “Gower and Shakespeare in *Pericles*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33 (1982): 461-479, p 464

¹⁷ Hoeniger 465

¹⁸ “Opinion’s but a fool, that makes us scan/The outward habit by the inward man.”(*Pericles, Prince of Tyre* II.ii.55-56)

very authoritative when instructing and lecturing for himself – presenting what seem to be the opinions and commentaries of the persona.

The instructing parts which encourage the audience to use their imagination to follow the scenes which are not represented in the performance, or to help the theatre with their power of visualisation (imagining a bark for the stage etc.) are used in accordance with the great deal of scenes which are narrated instead of showed. Because of the extensive story of the play, the chorus comments on the happenings, continuously reminding the listeners about the fates of the central characters. The chorus is here also necessary to guide the audience through all the places involved and the fast-moving time, which would be very hard to keep track of without such explanation. And lastly, the story would be impossible to cram into the four hour time limit of Shakespearean play while keeping it satisfactory without the narrated scenes.

The narrations, mostly presented in present tense for the effect of immediacy, illustrate scenes which could not be staged either because of time-limits or because of the limitations of the stage. The scenes of the storms in second and third act could be omitted and communicated in retrospective through the character of Pericles for example, but with a much lesser dramatic effect. The employment of the immediately presented narrations, which are usually closely followed by action, enrich the play.

An atypical means used to two different effects is the dumb-show. It is present here in the middle of the longer utterances of the chorus in order to provide an entertainment in the middle of an extremely long monologue. They give it a sense of suspense, because they are never openly explained immediately afterwards and their dumb character only provides a sense of expectation to the onlookers. Secondly, they support the sense of antiquity maintained throughout the play and choruses, as David Hoeniger states, “the old-fashioned semi-dramatic device, popular in plays two generations earlier suits Gower... and his tale perfectly”¹⁹.

¹⁹ Hoeniger 464

The Life of King Henry V: chorus with an opinion

In comparison to *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*; *the Life of King Henry V* is a much earlier play from Shakespeare's repertoire. Its usage of chorus, however, is much more complex. In contrast to Gower, who faithfully and reliably informs the audience about the events outside the scenes and creates fitting expectations which go along with the scenes, the chorus in *Henry V* is much less faithful to the play it accompanies.

The opening lines of the chorus of the first act start in a very dramatic manner. These lines in a way predict the light in which the chorus will attempt to present the story. It depicts the king as the roman god of war, Mars, with famine, sword and fire at his command, but straight after this image, it cuts off into the formal apology. In it the chorus asks for pardon for presenting the "great matter" on such a "unworthy scaffold". This sharp comparison is expanded by the following rhetorical questions:

Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden *O* the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt? (*Henry V*, I,i,11-15)

In these sentences, the chorus seems to emphasize the eminent difference in size of the spaces and the physical impossibility to present the story in all its details. Calling the theatre a "cockpit", in addition to pointing to its small size, also refers to the multipurpose of the many theatres of the time (used also for cock or bear fighting), which interestingly was not the case of The Globe. The "wooden O" transparently refers to the simple circular shape of the arena. After explaining the problems with the performance, the chorus proceeds to propose the solution, relying on the assistance of the audience:

O pardon, since a crookèd figure may
Attest in little place a million,
And let us, ciphers to this great account,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies
Whose high uprearèd and abutting fronts

The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts.
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance. (*Henry V*, I,i,16-26)

In this relatively specific instruction, the chorus combines explanations of how the theatre works with another piece of formal apology. The chorus builds on this notion later throughout the play. It also uses this as the typical introduction invoking the location of the story. This multifunctional passage continues into a very modern sounding plea:

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth,
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning th' accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass; for the which supply,
Admit me chorus to this history;
Who, prologue-like, your humble patience pray
Gently to hear, kindly to judge our play. (*Henry V*, I,i,27-35)

The first two lines of this passage resemble what today would be called the “camera eye”, a feature which generally appears in literature more than three centuries later. Once more the chorus draws the attention to the concept of the participation of the audience, but this time it literally shares the responsibility for the success of the play with the audience, which is a much bolder phrasing than in any other play. It also announces the methods the chorus is about to use in the subsequent speeches. The final two lines consist of probably the most famous formal apology of the chorus speaking for the theatre company.

The act which follows the idealising and even magnifying opening of the chorus, presents the king in a rather different manner. “The warlike Harry” seems to be willingly manipulated into his actions by his advisors. The first scene which reveals this manipulation has therefore been cut out of the play in its more patriotic versions (the movie version from 1944 which was supposed to raise the nationalist mood in the soldiers, in particular).

The second appearance of the chorus begins on a different note. Talking in the present tense, the chorus attempts to create an atmosphere of expectation and the image of a nation eagerly preparing for a war:

Now all the youth of England are on fire,
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies.
Now thrive the armorers, and honor's thought
Reigns solely in the breast of every man.
They sell the pasture now to buy the horse,
Following the mirror of all Christian kings
With wingèd heels, as English Mercurys. (*Henry V*, II,i,1-7)

The most prominent feature of this passage is the emphasis on the word “now”. The chorus stresses the immediacy of the narration, and creates the dramatic effect by combining metaphoric passages with practical details, which would surely appeal more intensively to the common people. The nation is described almost as idealistically as the king, which is highlighted by yet another Roman metaphor in which the Englishmen are compared to “English Mercurys.” This seems to only fit in the story the chorus is narrating, but is in discrepancy with the actions presented in the play. The characters of Nym and Pistol in their drunken state prove that the ordinary Englishmen feel far from enthusiastic about the war and are interested in personal profit instead of the “just cause” of the king. Admittedly, the chorus acknowledges such pragmatic considerations.

In the following four lines, a couplet is used to emphasize two lines, highlighting them with the rhyme in the otherwise blank verse text:

For now sits Expectation in the air
And hides a sword, from hilts unto the point,
With crowns imperial, crowns and coronets
Promised to Harry and his followers. (*Henry V*, II,i,8-11)

Depicting the preparations, the chorus mentions what is actually the cause. In the context of the allegedly heroic atmosphere and expectations, however, this cause comes out as rather superficial and mundane.

The presence of the couplet may be also identified as a marker, after which the theme of the chorus changes and its focus turns from the solely English situation to the conflict with France:

The French, advised by good intelligence
Of this most dreadful preparation,
Shake in their fear, and with pale policy
Seek to divert the English purposes. (*Henry V*, II,i,12-15)

The contrast between the depictions of the two countries is striking. It even gives the narration the sound of a fairy-tale because of the attempt at a clear contrast between the good and the bad. This is supported even further by a dramatic exclamation uttered by the chorus:

O England, model to thy inward greatness,
Like little body with a mighty heart,
What might'st thou do, that honor would thee do,
Were all thy children kind and natural! (*Henry V*, II,i,16-19)

This manner of personification of a nation is a frequently used rhetorical tactic in Shakespeare's plays. It is used not only by the chorus, but also by characters (in *Henry VI*) to endear the depicted subject to the hearer of the utterance. In this case it only intensifies the already employed contrast and almost creates a notion of England being the attacked country, not the aggressor. It also highlights the gravity of the treason which is described in the verses that follow. After the chorus properly identifies the "three corrupted men", it proceeds with creating expectations for the coming act:

Have, for the gilt of France (Oh, guilt indeed!),
Confirmed conspiracy with fearful France,
And by their hands this grace of kings must die, (*Henry V*, II,i,27-29)

The chorus here employs a typically Shakespearean wordplay in order to further criticise the actions of the traitors. It also keeps its rhetoric in depicting France as fearful and treacherous, and England as brave and virtuous. The dreary prospects are, however, undermined by the chorus itself, for it shall happen if: “If hell and treason hold their promises” (*Henry V*, II,i,30). In this oxymoron of treason holding its promises, the threat is subtly dismissed. As it continues, it dispels the fears even further, as Brennan states, “the conspiracy does not disturb our faith in England’s new found unity, because the chorus has already informed us, that we will ship for France.”²⁰

Linger your patience on, and we’ll digest
Th’ abuse of distance, force a play.
The sum is paid, the traitors are agreed,
The king is set from London, and the scene
Is now transported, gentles, to Southampton.
There is the playhouse now, there must you sit,
And thence to France shall we convey you safe
And bring you back, charming the narrow seas
To give you gentle pass; for, if we may,
We’ll not offend one stomach with our play.
But, till the king come forth, and not till then,
Unto Southampton do we shift our scene. (*Henry V*, II,i,31-42)

The final passage of the second chorus returns to the theme of the end of the first one – once more the audience is addressed very directly and instructed how to cooperate with the theatre. This time, however, it is combined with the immediate present tense and the emphasis on the word “now”, which echoes repeatedly throughout this appearance of the chorus. In the final four lines, the chorus changes tone from almost ordering intensity into humility, while also turning the blank verse into two couplets.

²⁰Anthony. S Brennan, “That Whithin Which Passes Show: The Function of the Chorus in *Henry V*”, *Philological Quarterly* 58 (1979): 40-52, p 44

The following act differs deeply from the chorus, and its opening scene could hardly be more opposing to the claims of the chorus. Moreover, after being repeatedly 'sent' to Southampton, the audience is surprised by the play still lingering in Eastchapel. This scene, however, presents an interlude between the chorus and any action concerning the announced treachery. In the second scene, the foreshadowed situation emerges, and as Brennan claims, thanks to being already informed about the treachery, the audience "can concentrate fully on the masterly fashion in which the king deals with it."²¹ The chorus here for once supports the ideal image of the king even in the acts.

The third appearance of the chorus is mostly built on description combined with addressing and instructions. It plays with the imagination of the audience, again painting very specific and detailed images before their minds eye with sentences full of exclamations:

O, do but think
You stand upon the ravage and behold
A city on the inconstant billows dancing;
For so appears this fleet majestical,
Holding due course to Harfleur. Follow, follow:
Grapple your minds to sternage of this navy,
And leave your England, as dead midnight still,
Guarded with grandsires, babies and old women, (*Henry V*, III,i,14-21)

These parts of the chorus provide a great deal of dramatic effect, and manage to show the audience scenes, which could not be performed. In comparison to *Pericles*, in which the chorus provided by the character of Gower uses similar construction, these passages are even more dramatic and detailed in depiction. They do, however, carry much less importance for the development of the story and, again in contrast to the trustworthy Gower, tend to provide misleading information:

For who is he, whose chin is but enrich'd
With one appearing hair, that will not follow
These cull'd and choice-drawn cavaliers to France? (*Henry V*, III,i,23-25)

²¹ Brennan 44

The audience, originally told in the second scene of the first act by the nobles organising the preparations, that only a third of the men is about to depart with the king, is here given a completely different information. Although the misinformation here is minor and can escape the audience, it is used for two purposes. Firstly, the dramatic effect is surely much increased by the alleged involvement of all the Englishmen; secondly, the image of England as a brave country united behind its king is strengthened.

In the final lines of the chorus, it actually does move the story forward through a few scenes, again using the audience's imaginative powers:

Work, work your thoughts, and therein see a siege;
Behold the ordnance on their carriages,
With fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur.
Suppose the ambassador from the French comes back;
Tells Harry that the king doth offer him
Katharine his daughter, and with her, to dowry,
Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms.
The offer likes not: and the nimble gunner
With linstock now the devilish cannon touches,
Alarum, and chambers go off.
And down goes all before them. Still be kind,
And eke out our performance with your mind. (*Henry V*, III,i,24-36)

The chorus again ends its appearance with a couplet including a small formal apology, which rounds up the utterance neatly. The following scenes feature the heroic speech of the king, which is “living up to the ideal set by the chorus”²², but the general effect is disrupted by Pistol. The characters of Pistol and Nym seem to create the counterweight to the idealistic chorus.

The fourth appearance of the chorus seems to mirror the second one, even beginning with the same word. In comparison to the second one, however, the atmosphere it creates and

²² Brennan 46

the situation it depicts are both widely different. The description of the preparation for the battle lacks the energy of the previous narrated passages, and even the intensity provided with the exclamations and orders to the audience in the previous one. Again, the focus on particular details combined with metaphorical comparisons adds to the ambience. After the mood of hopeless expectations and anxiety is described, the chorus proceeds to focus on the king, enlivening its tone in the process:

Oh, now, who will behold
The royal captain of this ruined band
Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent?
Let him cry, "Praise and glory on his head!"
For forth he goes and visits all his host,
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen. (*Henry V*, III,i,28-34)

The change of tone together with the change of vocabulary works to highlight the king's presence in a similar way he is described to influence his soldiers. The chorus not only describes the king "thawing fear" like "the sun", it also provides a similar effect, brightening its mood with the mention of the king. After illustrating this point and adding more virtue to the chorus version of the Henry V, the chorus traditionally leaves with a couplet and an apology.

The atmosphere prepared by the chorus, however, fits only partly. In the following act the audience is presented soldiers in a desperate mood and a king attempting to lighten the situation, but his efforts do not seem to be as determined or even as successful as the chorus promises. The king here actually lays down his public persona entirely for a monologue in which he contemplates the hardships of the rulers.

The fifth appearance of the chorus resembles strongly the third one. It navigates the imagination of the audience to recreate actions between scenes, this time with a great focus on the king, but also with an insight into the situation. The narration is wreathed with the conceit of ancient Rome:

How London doth pour out her citizens.
The Mayor and all his brethren in best sort,

Like to the senators of th' antique Rome,
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in (*Henry V*, IV,i,24-28)

The scenes mostly focus on the popularity of the king and his qualities, comparing him to a great but modest emperor. After this extended metaphor, the next act is introduced, bringing the king back to France. The whole return to England and many more years full of battles are bridged by one chorus, as the chorus initially announces. It seems to only serve as a division between the war and the peace. As Brennan states, “the atmosphere of war which has coloured the play must come to an end for the change in mood to the gay courtship which concludes the play.”²³

In the epilogue to the play, the chorus speaks for a moment not for the theatre company, but for the author. It presents one more apology similar to the one in the beginning before summing up the story of the glorified king. It reminds the audience of the story of the king's son, documented in two parts in Shakespeare's early *Henry VI*. The epilogue is widely different from the preceding choruses by its form – the appearance of the chorus which also speaks for the author is presented in the form of a sonnet, which once more closes its appearance with a couplet.

Throughout the play, the chorus seems to be narrating a different story than the dramatisation. It is generally more idealised and very patriotic, assigning divine or venerable qualities to the king and his people. This all is created through the same means through which Shakespeare's Gower narrates the missing part of the story of Pericles. The persona of the chorus does indeed stand outside the play again and speaks as a mediator between the audience and the theatre company, the mediation between the audience and the play, however, does not work smoothly, and both of the mediating functions are used to a certain theatrical effect.

The mediation between the theatre and the audience consists mostly of apologies and instructions. The chorus apologises repeatedly for the inadequacy of the stage and to the “great matter” performed. In the Elizabethan theatre, however, any more realistic performance could not be expected. Therefore it seems, that all the apologies are only

²³ Brennan 49

meant to “make the audience consider the theatrical environment”²⁴, as Danson claims. He explains that it manages to make the listeners use their imagination, but while doing so, they are made to keep their mind aware of their actual location in the theatre, therefore advertising the newly constructed Globe.²⁵ Brennan, on the other hand, claims that it strengthens the hold of the illusion by pointing at it²⁶, encouraging the audience to follow the illusion intentionally.

The narrative parts which in *Pericles* served to bridge long distances of time and space are here used mostly for dramatic effect. The scenes which are presented through them could either be incorporated in the play or are in no way necessary for the clarity of the story – in majority of Shakespeare’s historical plays equal portion of space and time is managed without the usage of a chorus. The scenes shown in the third and fifth chorus are therefore present solely to develop the image of the king and his loyal people, scenes which are important for their dramatic effect. Scenes in the second and fourth act are again only used to develop atmosphere and expectation for the next scenes, which the scenes universally fail to fulfil. The false information the chorus presents (misinforming about the numbers left in England or the location of a scene) seem to call attention to its untrustworthiness. In this context, the chorus stands for an unreliable narrator, again a literary method much later than Shakespeare.

Douglass and Weinman claim, that the contrast between the narration and the action is usually interpreted as the idealised or traditional presentation of the story contrasted with its more realistic version, but they deem it to be a nonsufficient explanation²⁷. The solution, although possible, seems slightly too simple, because although the acts in general do not agree with the chorus, there is an agreement with one character in the play. The chorus shares manner of presentation of the events, the patriotism and even the diction with the public speeches of the king. As Danson states, “the figure of the chorus rousing the audience ... is rather like the figure of Henry V addressing his men.” This connection together with the difference between king’s behaviour in public and in private, where in private he loses the mask of perfection and courage supported by the chorus, give the

²⁴ Lawrence Danson, “Henry V: King, Chorus, and Critics”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 27-43, p 28

²⁵ Danson 28

²⁶ Brennan 40

²⁷ Bruster and Weimann 147

character a multileveled performance – it creates the character of Henry V acting the role of a king. As James Calderwood claims “to play the king is to play the actor,” and concludes that “Harry acts wonderously well and the militant English road company for which he stars prospers apace.”²⁸ If we accept the character of Henry V as an actor, the chorus with all its discrepancy with the play actually fits in. It does not provide a chorus for the play about king Henry V, but for the character of king Henry V in his public role. This metatheatricality creates another, subtler, version of a play within a play.

²⁸,James L. Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979 , p 78

Conclusion

The figure of a mediator in Shakespeare's plays evolved in two different ways from its first two appearances in *Romeo and Juliet*. The first passage presented by the mediator, in the opening of the first act, stands for the first occurrence of a prologue. This is concluded from its position at the beginning of the play, the mediator persona presenting it from outside; and from its content consisting of a courteous address towards the audience, a formal apology for the theatre, and a promotion of the play. All these characteristics comply with the scheme of a prologue used by Shakespeare's contemporary authors. The prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* also introduces the story, from the origin roots of the plot around which the play unwinds to the final outcome. This is another frequent feature of contemporary prologues.

From this primary version, Shakespeare's prologue changes, developing the prominent features of its content. The addresses to the audience become progressively more appealing while abandoning much of the original obliqueness, therefore creating a slightly more confident persona of a mediator. The prologue's capacity of communication evolves from introducing the basic information about the play and a formal apology, to explaining the reasons for specific arrangement of the play and author's intentions. While most of the formal features remain unaltered, the form keeps changing in order to create the intended atmosphere for the play, employing rhyme or blank verse depending on the situation.

The second appearance of a mediator persona in *Romeo and Juliet* seems to represent the first emergence of a chorus. The only aspect contradicting this categorisation is the position of the utterance - there is only one instance appearing in the beginning of the second act, while choruses traditionally guide the audience throughout the play, opening each act. Other features of this performance of a mediator persona, however, show a clear connection with Shakespeare's choruses from his later career. It functions in bridging the merrier opening act of the play and the tragedy which unfolds from the second act onward. It comments only on the story which immediately proceeds or follows, as is typical for a chorus, and creates atmosphere and expectations for the following act.

The following two Shakespeare's plays in which a chorus appears combine the aforementioned chorus functions with a part of features identified in the prologues: direct speeches towards the audience, whether used to communicate an apology or to instruct, a commentary on the story and its background. Functions of chorus which are already used

in *Romeo and Juliet*, namely moving the story forward, connecting acts (by bridging time and space gaps) and setting atmosphere before each act, are employed to a much greater extent. Moreover, many of these aspects are used to different purposes and other uses of the mediator persona are added based on the specific context of the play.

The bridging function of the chorus is in one case used extensively in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, to help the author cover a vaster amount of space and time in a play than ever before. It connects scenes across many years, substitutes parts of the scenes, and allows the play to follow more characters through the complex storyline. In the other case, in *Henry V*, it is used in order to highlight particular scenes, to emphasize certain aspect of the story and to shape the experience of the audience. In both cases present tense and focus on details is used in combination with appeal on the imagination of the audience and their participation, to create a strong sense of immediacy and even participation. This function therefore develops far beyond its original purpose, as does the direct speech towards the audience.

The direct addresses towards the audience preserve the apologetic function, which seems to be often used to highlight the qualities of the performance and the theatre instead of diminishing it. As Danson states, “the Chorus can call attention to the play’s inherent theatrical limitations at the same time that it invites us to revel in theatricality.”²⁹ Moreover, the chorus can communicate, through these direct speeches towards the audience, the reasons and intentions behind the scenes. The mediation of the chorus which evolves most interestingly, however, is between the chorus and the play.

The communication between the chorus and the play evolves rapidly. From the chorus informing the audience and reminding them of the happenings, it grows to shape the play and its characters. Moreover, both of the choruses seem to develop a connection to the main characters of their play. In *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Pericles occasionally uses a couplet to make a moral commentary, as Hoeniger states, “the rhymes turn the conventional morals into tags that Gower would wish us to remember, tags that strike us as naive in their simplicity and patness, as do his own”³⁰. In *The Life of King Henry V*, the coordination is less distinct, but more persistent, as all king’s public speeches agree with, and seem to use the same diction as the chorus.

²⁹ Danson 29

³⁰ Hoeniger 469

The development of the mediator persona, already identified in Shakespeare's prologues, is even more prominent in the context of choruses. Here it is manifested by two different ways.

The main innovation presented by of the chorus in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, is the specific identity of the chorus persona – the character of Gower. This adds atmosphere and authority to the whole play, but also grants the chorus a partial independence. By being presented by a specific character persona which adds its own views and comments, and even speaks of its own role in the play as of the one who shows the story (rather than only introducing it), the chorus gains a certain autonomy. This is however only used to the extent, that the persona of the chorus seems to be talking from its own point of view.

The chorus in *The Life of King Henry V* uses its independence to a vastly different effect. Although its chorus persona is still anonymous, it enjoys a freedom in emphasizing certain aspects of the story and suppressing others. As Brennan claims, "The Chorus has a very selective imagination; it will deal only with glamour and bravery."³¹

³¹ Brennan 42

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Appendices:

Pericles, Prince of Tyre - choruses

I,i

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:
This king unto him took a fere,
Who died and left a female heir,
So buxom, blithe, and full of face,
As heaven had lent her all his grace;
With whom the father liking took,
And her to incest did provoke:
Bad child; worse father! to entice his own
To evil should be done by none:
But custom what they did begin

Was with long use account no sin.
The beauty of this sinful dame
Made many princes thither frame,
To seek her as a bed-fellow,
In marriage-pleasures play-fellow:
Which to prevent he made a law,
To keep her still, and men in awe,
That whoso ask'd her for his wife,
His riddle told not, lost his life:
So for her many a wight did die,
As yon grim looks do testify.
What now ensues, to the judgment of your eye
I give, my cause who best can justify.

II,i

Here have you seen a mighty king
His child, I wis, to incest bring;
A better prince and benign lord,
That will prove awful both in deed and word.
Be quiet then as men should be,
Till he hath pass'd necessity.
I'll show you those in troubles reign,
Losing a mite, a mountain gain.
The good in conversation,
To whom I give my benison,
Is still at Tarsus, where each man
Thinks all is writ he speken can;
And, to remember what he does,
Build his statue to make him glorious:
But tidings to the contrary
Are brought your eyes; what need speak I?
DUMB SHOW.

[Enter at one door PERICLES talking with CLEON; all] the train with them. Enter at another door a Gentleman, with a letter to PERICLES; PERICLES shows the letter to

CLEON; gives the Messenger a reward, and knights him. Exit PERICLES at one door,
and CLEON at another]

Good Helicane, that stay'd at home,
Not to eat honey like a drone
From others' labours; for though he strive
To killen bad, keep good alive;
And to fulfil his prince' desire,
Sends word of all that haps in Tyre:
How Thaliard came full bent with sin
And had intent to murder him;
And that in Tarsus was not best
Longer for him to make his rest.
He, doing so, put forth to seas,
Where when men been, there's seldom ease;
For now the wind begins to blow;
Thunder above and deeps below
Make such unquiet, that the ship
Should house him safe is wreck'd and split;
And he, good prince, having all lost,
By waves from coast to coast is tost:
All perishen of man, of pelf,
Ne aught escapen but himself;
Till fortune, tired with doing bad,
Threw him ashore, to give him glad:
And here he comes. What shall be next,
Pardon old Gower,—this longs the text.

III, i

Now sleep y-slaked hath the rout;
No din but snores the house about,
Made louder by the o'er-fed breast
Of this most pompous marriage-feast.
The cat, with eyne of burning coal,

Now crouches fore the mouse's hole;
And crickets sing at the oven's mouth,
E'er the blither for their drouth.
Hymen hath brought the bride to bed.
Where, by the loss of maidenhead,
A babe is moulded. Be attent,
And time that is so briefly spent
With your fine fancies quaintly eche:
What's dumb in show I'll plain with speech.

DUMB SHOW.

[Enter, PERICLES and SIMONIDES at one door, with]

Attendants; a Messenger meets them, kneels, and gives PERICLES a letter:

PERICLES shows it SIMONIDES; the Lords kneel to him. Then enter THAISA with child, with LYCHORIDA a nurse. The KING shows her the letter; she rejoices: she and PERICLES takes leave of her father, and depart with LYCHORIDA and their Attendants. Then exeunt SIMONIDES and the rest]

By many a dern and painful perch
Of Pericles the careful search,
By the four opposing coigns
Which the world together joins,
Is made with all due diligence
That horse and sail and high expense
Can stead the quest. At last from Tyre,
Fame answering the most strange inquire,
To the court of King Simonides
Are letters brought, the tenor these:
Antiochus and his daughter dead;
The men of Tyrus on the head
Of Helicanus would set on
The crown of Tyre, but he will none:
The mutiny he there hastes t' oppress;
Says to 'em, if King Pericles
Come not home in twice six moons,
He, obedient to their dooms,

Will take the crown. The sum of this,
Brought hither to Pentapolis,
Y-ravished the regions round,
And every one with claps can sound,
'Our heir-apparent is a king!
Who dream'd, who thought of such a thing?'
Brief, he must hence depart to Tyre:
His queen with child makes her desire—
Which who shall cross?—along to go:
Omit we all their dole and woe:
Lychorida, her nurse, she takes,
And so to sea. Their vessel shakes
On Neptune's billow; half the flood
Hath their keel cut: but fortune's mood
Varies again; the grisly north
Disgorges such a tempest forth,
That, as a duck for life that dives,
So up and down the poor ship drives:
The lady shrieks, and well-a-neighbor
Does fall in travail with her fear:
And what ensues in this fell storm
Shall for itself itself perform.
I will relate, action may
Conveniently the rest convey;
Which might not what by me is told.
In your imagination hold
This stage the ship, upon whose deck
The sea-tost Pericles appears to speak.

IV,i

Imagine Pericles arrived at Tyre,
Welcomed and settled to his own desire.
His woeful queen we leave at Ephesus,

Unto Diana there a votaress.
Now to Marina bend your mind,
Whom our fast-growing scene must find
At Tarsus, and by Cleon train'd
In music, letters; who hath gain'd
Of education all the grace,
Which makes her both the heart and place
Of general wonder. But, alack,
That monster envy, oft the wrack
Of earned praise, Marina's life
Seeks to take off by treason's knife.
And in this kind hath our Cleon
One daughter, and a wench full grown,
Even ripe for marriage-rite; this maid
Hight Philoten: and it is said
For certain in our story, she
Would ever with Marina be:
Be't when she weaved the sleided silk
With fingers long, small, white as milk;
Or when she would with sharp needle wound
The cambric, which she made more sound
By hurting it; or when to the lute
She sung, and made the night-bird mute,
That still records with moan; or when
She would with rich and constant pen
Vail to her mistress Dian; still
This Philoten contends in skill
With absolute Marina: so
With the dove of Paphos might the crow
Vie feathers white. Marina gets
All praises, which are paid as debts,
And not as given. This so darks
In Philoten all graceful marks,
That Cleon's wife, with envy rare,

A present murderer does prepare
For good Marina, that her daughter
Might stand peerless by this slaughter.
The sooner her vile thoughts to stead,
Lychorida, our nurse, is dead:
And cursed Dionyza hath
The pregnant instrument of wrath
Prest for this blow. The unborn event
I do commend to your content:
Only I carry winged time
Post on the lame feet of my rhyme;
Which never could I so convey,
Unless your thoughts went on my way.
Dionyza does appear,
With Leonine, a murderer.

IV, iv

Thus time we waste, and longest leagues make short;
Sail seas in cockles, have an wish but for't;
Making, to take your imagination,
From bourn to bourn, region to region.
By you being pardon'd, 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' the gaps to teach you,
The stages of our story. Pericles
Is now again thwarting the wayward seas,
Attended on by many a lord and knight.
To see his daughter, all his life's delight.
Old Escanes, whom Helicanus late
Advanced in time to great and high estate,
Is left to govern. Bear you it in mind,
Old Helicanus goes along behind.

Well-sailing ships and bounteous winds have brought
This king to Tarsus,—think his pilot thought;
So with his steerage shall your thoughts grow on,—
To fetch his daughter home, who first is gone.
Like motes and shadows see them move awhile;
Your ears unto your eyes I'll reconcile.
DUMB SHOW.

[Enter PERICLES, at one door, with all his train;] CLEON and DIONYZA, at the
other. CLEON shows PERICLES the tomb; whereat PERICLES makes lamentation,
puts on sackcloth, and in a mighty passion departs. Then exeunt CLEON and
DIONYZA]

See how belief may suffer by foul show!
This borrow'd passion stands for true old woe;
And Pericles, in sorrow all devour'd,
With sighs shot through, and biggest tears o'erhower'd,
Leaves Tarsus and again embarks. He swears
Never to wash his face, nor cut his hairs:
He puts on sackcloth, and to sea. He bears
A tempest, which his mortal vessel tears,
And yet he rides it out. Now please you wit.
The epitaph is for Marina writ
By wicked Dionyza.

[Reads the inscription on MARINA's monument]
'The fairest, sweet'st, and best lies here,
Who wither'd in her spring of year.
She was of Tyrus the king's daughter,
On whom foul death hath made this slaughter;
Marina was she call'd; and at her birth,
Thetis, being proud, swallow'd some part o' the earth:
Therefore the earth, fearing to be o'erflow'd,
Hath Thetis' birth-child on the heavens bestow'd:
Wherefore she does, and swears she'll never stint,
Make raging battery upon shores of flint.'

No visor does become black villany
So well as soft and tender flattery.
Let Pericles believe his daughter's dead,
And bear his courses to be ordered
By Lady Fortune; while our scene must play
His daughter's woe and heavy well-a-day
In her unholy service. Patience, then,
And think you now are all in Mytilene.

V, i

Marina thus the brothel 'scapes, and chances
Into an honest house, our story says.
She sings like one immortal, and she dances
As goddess-like to her admired lays;
Deep clerks she dumbs; and with her needle composes
Nature's own shape, of bud, bird, branch, or berry,
That even her art sisters the natural roses;
Her inkle, silk, twin with the rubied cherry:
That pupils lacks she none of noble race,
Who pour their bounty on her; and her gain
She gives the cursed bawd. Here we her place;
And to her father turn our thoughts again,
Where we left him, on the sea. We there him lost;
Whence, driven before the winds, he is arrived
Here where his daughter dwells; and on this coast
Suppose him now at anchor. The city strived
God Neptune's annual feast to keep: from whence
Lysimachus our Tyrian ship espies,
His banners sable, trimm'd with rich expense;
And to him in his barge with fervor hies.
In your supposing once more put your sight
Of heavy Pericles; think this his bark:

Where what is done in action, more, if might,
Shall be discover'd; please you, sit and hark.

V, ii

Now our sands are almost run;
More a little, and then dumb.
This, my last boon, give me,
For such kindness must relieve me,
That you aptly will suppose
What pageantry, what feats, what shows,
What minstrelsy, and pretty din,
The regent made in Mytilene
To greet the king. So he thrived,
That he is promised to be wived
To fair Marina; but in no wise
Till he had done his sacrifice,
As Dian bade: whereto being bound,
The interim, pray you, all confound.
In feather'd briefness sails are fill'd,
And wishes fall out as they're will'd.
At Ephesus, the temple see,
Our king and all his company.
That he can hither come so soon,
Is by your fancy's thankful doom.

V, iii

In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard
Of monstrous lust the due and just reward:
In Pericles, his queen and daughter, seen,
Although assail'd with fortune fierce and keen,
Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown'd with joy at last:

In Helicanus may you well descry
A figure of truth, of faith, of loyalty:
In reverend Cerimon there well appears
The worth that learned charity aye wears:
For wicked Cleon and his wife, when fame
Had spread their cursed deed, and honour'd name
Of Pericles, to rage the city turn,
That him and his they in his palace burn;
The gods for murder seemed so content
To punish them; although not done, but meant.
So, on your patience evermore attending,
New joy wait on you! Here our play has ending.