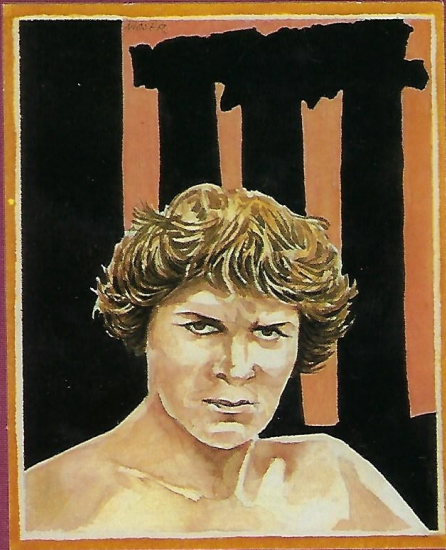


THE GUILD
Shakespeare



THE GUILD

Shakespeare

TIMON OF ATHENS
PERICLES

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY
JOHN F. ANDREWS

Foreword by Toby Robertson

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FOREWORD

to

PERICLES

by Toby Robertson



In 1973–74 the Prospect Theatre Company, of which I was Director, undertook a major international tour for the British Council. We visited Europe, Russia, and the Middle East with three plays: Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, Shakespeare's perennial *Twelfth Night*, and the rarely performed *Pericles*.

Pericles just scrapes into the Shakespeare canon. Of doubtful

TOBY ROBERTSON is the current Artistic Director of Theatr Clwyd in North Wales. He has directed productions of Shakespeare throughout the world, including *Measure for Measure* in Beijing, *Coriolanus* in Spain, and an Obie Award-winning *Pericles* in the United States. During the course of his theatrical career, he has served as Director of Britain's Prospect Theatre Company and the Old Vic Theatre, and he was responsible for the revival of many neglected classics now reestablished in the repertoire, including Otway's *Soldier of Fortune*, Vanbrugh's *The Confederacy*, Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, and most recently *Edward III*, thought by many to be by Shakespeare.

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authorship, possibly a collaboration, it is one of the least performed of Shakespeare's plays. The reason may be that it is fairly strong meat. The brothel scenes, for example, have a sodden whiff about them; and judged on the page, much of *Pericles* has been dismissed as crude and ineffective.

Pericles is usually described as a Romance. Here life is seen as it is, generally harsh and vicious, but at key moments it is suffused with a haunting and unexpected beauty. *Pericles* is a piece that shows the author as a shrewd man of the theatre, seeing the possibility of theatrical success in what might appear to be very unpromising raw material. It is possibly for this reason that it is described in the frontispiece of the first printing as "the much admired play" rather than as the "life" or "history" of *Pericles*.

It would be wrong to dismiss the play's picture of a corrupt and debased world of self-interest and sexual immorality as gratuitous commercialism on the part of the author. Good triumphs finally over evil, and the trials and tribulations of *Pericles* are as necessary as in any Pilgrim's Progress towards perfect peace. The Chorus-like Gower leans on the audience's indulgence throughout the play, and it is our response to the ambivalence of the beauty within the corruption, and our sense of increasing wonder and fulfillment as the suffering increases, which lifts *Pericles* above the average Jacobean romance.

There is in *Pericles* something of the great Sea Music of *The Tempest*, and something of the almost unbearable emotion of the reconciliation scene in *King Lear*. It is perhaps the most perfect example of the "comical-historical-tragical-pastoral" of which Polonius talks in *Hamlet*. *Pericles* is Everyman,

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A Man whom both the Waters and the Wind
In that vast Tennis Court hath made the Ball
For them to play upon.

His sufferings, more extensive and perhaps more confusing than those of any other Shakespearean hero, invoke a sense of life as a journey. *Pericles* must lose himself to find himself. The Alexandrian poet C. P. Cavafy wrote of this in his poem "Strengthening the Spirit":

He who longs to strengthen his spirit
must go beyond obedience and respect.
He will continue to honour some laws
but he will mostly violate
both law and custom, and live beyond
the established and deficient norm.
Pleasure will have much to teach him.
He will not be afraid of the destructive act:
one half of the house must be pulled down.
This way he will grow virtuously
into knowledge.

The Prospect Theatre Company chose to produce *Pericles* because much of our tour was to take us around the Mediterranean, near sites mentioned in the play: for example, Tyre, Ephesus, Mytilene. In contrast to a fairly orthodox *Twelfth Night* in an Illyrian setting, we gave *Pericles* a modern, transvestite production, mirroring the reversal of sexuality that is a feature of the text. The production recreated in almost Genetesque terms the

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decadence of the Weimar Republic; the brothel scene in Act IV overflowed to encompass the whole. Sir Harold Hobson wrote of the production, "In this lurid atmosphere the *Pericles* of Derek Jacobi, gentle and incisive, passes like a beneficent spirit, spectacularly offset by the obscene evil of Harold Innocent's masterly Bawd." But in production finally the brothel faded—all were "out of the Road of Rutting forever." Father and daughter were restored, and a great sea of joys threatened to drown all with their sweetness.

Above all, *Pericles* is a play for music. Gower's opening lines set the tone:

To sing a Song that once was sung,
From Ashes ancient Gower is come.

In our production riddles, dumb-shows, triumphs, storm, the Gods, and the final benediction were all interpreted and integrated into the crazy, jumbled world that is *Pericles* by a largely "Pop" score composed by Carl Davis. The "Music of the Spheres," however, was inaudible to all but *Pericles*.

The production was considered too shocking by the Russian authorities for Moscow or Leningrad. Ironically *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, about the military rape of a country, was deemed acceptable. At Baalbeck in Lebanon the Temple of Jupiter where we played was said to have smiled for the first time since the Emperor Constantine put down the Eleusinian Mysteries. But the play was unacceptable in Cairo because of Islamic fundamentalism. The Athenian audience in the Herod Atticus, looking forward to free elections at the time of the Colonel's dictatorship,

demanding for over half an hour the repeat of the final song, "New Joy Wait on You." In Rome the theatre, half empty at the interval, was full by the beginning of the second act—so quickly spread the word of mouth. The production played twice in London (at the Roundhouse and at Her Majesty's Theatre), and I revived it at the Jean Cocteau in New York for Eve Adamson in 1980 (an Obie winner), and later for John Houseman's Acting Company (with Tom Hewitt as *Pericles*) when the production toured the United States.

Certainly no play was ever more enjoyable to direct. But not every production has been so favoured. The story of the Victorian actor/manager John Coleman, who at 70 came out of retirement to direct and play in *Pericles* in 1900 at Stratford-upon-Avon, is described by Oscar Asche and his wife Lily Brayton, who were members of the company. According to Asche, "In his version of *Pericles*, Coleman had not hesitated to purge the first act, eradicate what he called the banality of the second, cut out Gower entirely, and eliminate the fourth act."

Coleman instructed Miss Brayton as follows:

Miss Braybone. You enter, followed by the maidens. You are on your way to the Temple of Venus, where you are about to sacrifice a pair of white doves to the Goddess of Love. As you cross the stage you see me lying unconscious on the ground. You have never seen such a God-like man in your life. You stoop and gaze at me. Your gaze brings me to life. I look up and my eyes meet yours. You see in my wondrous eyes love, you stretch out your little hand to me. I rise on one knee and press that lily

hand to my parched lips. You flush all over with emotion, withdraw your hand as a maiden should, and walk off, your eyes still gazing into mine. You do not utter a word. It is a case of ocular lovemaking. It will thrill the audience, and I will kneel again and weep with joy.

Miss Brayton wrote of the evening:

On the night, I came on, complete with doves and maidens. There was John Coleman lying on the stage. He had on a complete suit of pink fleshings, on which, to indicate that he had just been washed up from the sea, here and there clumps of green seaweed had been sewn. He also had on a pair of green satin trunks and some worsted football stockings, also sewn about with seaweed. On his head was a beautifully oiled and curled yellow wig, and a curled-up moustache and beard surrounded his parched lips. I gazed dutifully, and he tried to get up. He couldn't, so I and the maidens raised him, and off I went, ocular lovemaking and all.

According to Oscar Asche, "The entire evening was the most disgraceful insult to the Bard that could have been perpetrated by the Governors of the Memorial Theatre."

But John Coleman had the last word: "Some of these young actors have not, I'm afraid, the same spirit as we of the old brigade: pretty lipping hawthorn buds, cricket, and Oxford de-

grees. But I am grateful for their assistance in making my *Pericles*, the project—for so long dear to my heart—such an outstanding success. The climax of one's life's devotion to the art it loves. The rest is silence."

Editor's Introduction to
TIMON OF ATHENS
and
PERICLES



My long Sickness
Of Health and Living now begins to mend,
And Nothing brings me All Things.

These words belong to the protagonist of *Timon of Athens* (V.ii.71–73), and they describe his response to the kind of extremity a man experiences “when Fortune in her Shift and Change of Mood / Spurns down her late Belov’d” (I.i.83–84). For Timon the only way to mend an existence he has now come to view as a lingering malady is to accept—indeed welcome—its final degradation from “All” to “Nothing.” He therefore prepares himself a “low Grave” as far as possible from the rout of humanity, composes a misanthropic epitaph for anyone who happens to stumble upon his tombstone, and looks forward to the day when he will at last be mingled with the soil on “the very Hem o’ th’ Sea” (V.v.79, 66).

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But scornful repudiation of all the denizens of “this false World” (IV.iii.374) is not the only way to derive “All Things” from the “Nothing” to which a person may be brought by “Life’s uncertain Voyage” (V.ii.87). The title character of *Pericles* is eventually reduced to an “Extremity” (V.ii.126) no less wrenching than Timon’s, and in a coastal setting that parallels the “beached Verge” his Athenian counterpart selects for his last resting place. At first, like Timon, the despondent Prince of Tyre resists the solicitations of those who endeavor to rescue him from the buffetings of “Fortune fierce and keen” (V.v.4). In the end, however, Pericles submits an old man’s broken will to the ministrations of smiling “Patience” (V.ii.125–26), and his “Purchase” (I.i.9) is a “Sea of Joys” so all-encompassing that they bid fair to “o’rbear the Shores” of his frail “Mortality” and drown him “with their Sweetness” (V.ii.176–78).

Notwithstanding the many respects in which they differ, the two plays in this volume are both “moral Paintings” about the way human beings receive those “quick Blows of Fortune’s” that try men’s souls (*Timon of Athens*, I.i.89–90). As the inimitable Fluellen reminds us in one of the more amusing moments of *Henry V* (III.vi.32–37), “Fortune is painted blind, . . . and she is painted also with a Wheel, to signify to you, which is the Moral of it, that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation.” In truth, the earnest Welshman insists, “the Poet makes a most excellent Description of it: Fortune is an excellent Moral.”

And so she is in *Timon of Athens*. For all his hypocrisy as one of those hangers-on who “propagate their States” at a generous patron’s expense (I.i.66), the Poet who philosophizes about Dame Fortune in the opening scene of Shakespeare’s most

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EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

acerbic satire offers an excellent description of the way this fickle Goddess bestows her bounty. At present, the Poet observes to the Painter, the great-hearted Timon appears to be Fortune’s darling. The noble Athenian has been “beckon’d from the Rest below” to ascend “the steepy Mount” on which the “Sov’reign Lady” maintains her court. For a while Timon will be encouraged to “climb his Happ’ness.” In due course, however, the suitor who now looks down from what he regards as a secure hold on the pinnacle will find himself in a different kind of isolation at “the Base o’ th’ Mount,” with no one to assist him to his seat or accompany “his declining Foot” (I.i.62–87).

After the Poet’s prediction has been borne out—after Fortune’s chief courtier has been flung headlong from the heights of favor, fame, and temporal felicity—Timon’s compassionate Steward describes his master as a man who was born “Rich” only to be made “Wretched” by his downfall. The lord who once had everything has suddenly discovered that “when the Means are gone that buy” the flatterer’s praise, “the Breath is gone whereof this Praise is made” (II.ii.164–65). And even more devastating than Timon’s recognition that it is now too late to preserve his magnificent dwelling from the parasites who have been consuming it is his realization that the “Friends” he believed to be his greatest wealth (II.ii.179–80) are nothing but “Summer Birds” (III.vi.33) who “shut their Doors” against the “setting Sun” (I.ii.157) their host has ultimately come to embody.

In revulsion the hero heaps imprecations on the walls of Athens, retreats to a cave in the woods, and prays that the Gods will grant him a way to undo the city that has used him only to abuse him. No sooner has Timon pronounced “Destruction” on

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mankind than he begins digging for the "Roots" he now plans to live on. To his surprise, he unearths not tubers but the root that nourishes all evil: a glittering "Poison" that "will knit and break / Religions, bless th' Accurst, make the hoar Leprosy / Ador'd," and plague the world with all the ills to which avaricious man is subject (IV.iii.22-35).

Ironically, what Timon finds in the wilderness is gold, the same "Whore of Mankind" that made and unmade him in his native Athens. And what he proceeds to do with it is almost precisely what he did with his earlier treasure. The telling difference is that the coins Timon now doles out to his guests are intended not to benefit their recipients but to curse them. Having concluded that "good" fortune is man's adversary rather than his benefactor, Timon executes with relentless logic a strategy that will permit him to settle his scores in the most fitting manner imaginable: by giving to each of his visitors something that answers to what they ask him for.

In the meantime the stripped-down protagonist unleashes a stream of vituperation even more scathing than the wrathful outbursts of another "unaccommodated Man," an outcast monarch who also feels "more sinn'd against than sinning." *Timon of Athens* is frequently set beside *King Lear*, and to a significant extent the rantings of its title character evoke the indignation of the patriarch who storms his way to madness on Britain's unsparring heaths. But Shakespeare's analysis of the misanthropy that issues from ingratitude is by no means limited to *Timon of Athens* and *King Lear*; it can also be observed in *Coriolanus*.

The dramatist appears to have written *Timon of Athens* during the same period (1607-8) when he turned to the fourth and final

installment of his sequence on Roman history. He drew much of his material for *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens* from the same source, Sir Thomas North's 1595 edition of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. And he ended the two tragedies in a way that parallels Plutarch's own approach to the pertinent narratives: the compromise to which Alcibiades consents when he forswears the vengeance that he and Timon have vowed against Athens anticipates Coriolanus' decision to heed his mother's pleas and spare his native Rome.

Comparing *Timon of Athens* solely to *King Lear* and *Coriolanus* is somewhat distorting, however, because in tone and dramatic technique it has at least as many affinities with *Troilus and Cressida*. Like Shakespeare's mordant treatment of the matter of Troy, *Timon of Athens* is a work whose debates about ethical and metaphysical issues make rigorous demands upon a playgoer's intellect. And, again like *Troilus and Cressida*, it appears—perhaps for that reason—to have had few if any performances in the public theatres of Shakespeare's own day. It is possible that both plays were commercial failures. It is equally possible that the two works were designed not for popular consumption but for private audiences with the sophistication to appreciate dialogue too challenging, if not too dark and nihilistic, for the entertainment of ordinary spectators. And it has been suggested that *Timon of Athens*, whose text has somewhat more than the usual allotment of loose ends and inconsistencies, was abandoned by the playwright before he completed the finishing touches that would have been required to make it suitable for staging of any kind.

The only thing we can say for certain is that a version of *Timon of Athens* was eventually published, apparently from the

author's own manuscript, in the 1623 memorial volume now known as the First Folio. Owing to some problems that may have had to do with the copyright for *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens* found its way into the Folio slot that had originally been reserved for Shakespeare's Trojan play. Some scholars have seen in this circumstance a sign that the compilers of the Folio had not initially planned to include *Timon of Athens* in their collection, either because they had reservations about its merits (if it was left unpolished) or because they were dissatisfied with the condition of the only script they were able to supply to the printers (if for some reason the final version of the work was no longer to be obtained). There is no compelling evidence that the Folio editors felt any such qualms about *Timon of Athens*. If they did, however, they must have set them aside in the interest of transmitting to posterity an anatomy of social vices that bears the unmistakable stamp of Shakespeare's genius.

But what was their reason for omitting *Pericles*? It was evidently quite popular in the theatre, and a crude edition of this "much admired Play" that first appeared in a 1609 quarto had been twice reprinted in the same modest format. Just why it was excluded from the Folio, then, we can only guess. It may be that the sponsors of the 1623 anthology, unable to obtain a better text than the one that was already in print, were unwilling to reproduce *Pericles* in so mangled a form. It may be that the Folio editors were prevented from including in any form a title to which they did not hold the publishing rights. And it may even be, as some scholars have speculated, that the deceased playwright's erstwhile colleagues did not wish to represent as Shakespeare's a dramatic work they knew to be his only in part. Whatever the

reason, its absence from the Folio makes *Pericles* the most problematic text in the Shakespearean canon.

Just how corrupt the only substantive edition it can be a matter of interpretation. It was published by someone other than the agent who had registered the copyright for *Pericles* with the Stationers' Company. It was evidently printed in two different shops. And it was typeset by at least three different compositors, two of whom appear to have been inexperienced with dramatic scripts and were thus unable to distinguish between prose and verse in the copy from which they worked. There can be no doubt that much of what we find in the 1609 Quarto of *Pericles* calls for editorial intervention, particularly in the lineation of verse passages the earliest printing renders as prose. But how much emendation is required to correct errors in the Quarto's phrasing and punctuation?

For the majority of scholars who believe that the manuscript behind the initial text was produced and supplied in what the Folio editors would later call a "stolne and surreptitious" manner, the answer tends to be "a great deal." Most of these scholars infer that at least part of the *Pericles* we have was pieced together by one or more scribes who used shorthand while attending performances in the theatre. Others conclude that much of it was assembled by one or more of the actors who had performed roles in the play and who were relying on their memories not only for their own lines but for those of their fellow actors. In either case, scholars who hypothesize that the Quarto of *Pericles* is a "reported" text feel at liberty to emend it freely, especially when it is at variance with *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, a prose narrative published by George Wilkins in 1608. Wilkins

was a minor writer of the period, and his novel appears to have been a loose paraphrase of the play as it was performed in 1607–8. Because the Wilkins account of the story is widely accepted as an independent witness to the lost original of the *Pericles* script, most editors adopt readings from it to correct what they assume to be errors in the 1609 Quarto.

It is conceivable, however, that the Quarto printing of *Pericles* derives, at least in part, from a transcriptional link to the dramatist's own draft of the play. If so, its inadequacies may often be less radical, and of a different kind, than those that would result either from an oral record of the play or from a text reconstructed by one or more of its actors. This has been the working principle behind the *Guild* edition, and as a consequence the *Pericles* presented here retains far more of the 1609 Quarto than do most renderings of the play today.

It goes without saying that an editor's hypothesis about the nature of the text of *Pericles* has no bearing on his hypothesis about the authorship of the work. But just as it is possible to hold a more sanguine view of the earliest printing, it is also possible to hold a more positive view of those portions of the play that are generally dismissed as unworthy of Shakespeare. What are conventionally designated as Acts I and II—like other quartos, the 1609 edition has no act and scene divisions—are stylistically different from the remainder of *Pericles*. There can be no question that the language of the work's early scenes is more archaic, and in many ways less complex and subtle, than that of the portion beginning with Act III. It may well be that the reason for the difference is an author other than Shakespeare for the first two acts (with George Wilkins, John Day, and Thomas Heywood as

the playwrights most frequently proposed for what is generally regarded as a dubious honor). But it may also be that Shakespeare himself was responsible for the variations between the two portions of the play and that the comparative clunkiness of the opening scenes is related to the dramatist's artistic design.

Pericles begins with the figure of John Gower, a fourteenth-century English poet who announces that he has risen from his ashes to "sing" anew "a Song that old was sung." A woodcut of Gower on the title-page of George Wilkins' novel suggests that the author of *Confessio Amantis* (written circa 1383–93) must have looked as quaint on the Shakespearean stage as he sounds in the first few choruses he delivers. And much of the dialogue in Acts I and II is of a piece with the woodenness and naive charm of Gower's narrative. The effect is to summon up something of the primitive, bookish atmosphere of the playwright's primary source for the incidents he depicts in *Pericles*.

Then, by imperceptible degrees, the chorus that introduces Act III opens the curtain to a more vibrant world. We continue to hear archaisms from time to time; but without being conscious of just how and when it occurred, we soon find ourselves in a realm that seems less overtly medieval in its ambience.

Twentieth-century filmmakers have sometimes effected similar transitions from one mode to another. One thinks, for example, of the shift from black-and-white Kansas to the technicolor wonderland of Dorothy's dreams in *The Wizard of Oz*. Or, somewhat closer to the situation in *Pericles*, one recalls the way Laurence Olivier begins his 1944 *Henry V* within the awkward confines of Shakespeare's "Wooden O," the Globe playhouse, and

then sweeps us by the magic of his cinematic art to the "vasty Fields of France."

If one playwright did compose the two halves of *Pericles*, this panoramic epic represents yet another of his daring experiments in dramatic form. In many of its characteristics the play takes us back to the deceptive simplicity we noted in *The Comedy of Errors*. There, by imitating the conventions of Plautine farce, Shakespeare produced a *commedia* that translated Fortune's whims into the mysterious workings of Providence. In a way that would almost seem to have been planned, moreover, the dramatist laid a foundation for the remarkable sequence of romances that would commence with his later return to the same imaginative stimulus: John Gower's retelling of an old story about the adventures of a prince named Apollonius of Tyre.

In *The Comedy of Errors*, his earlier appropriation of this evocative narrative, Shakespeare had alluded to the hero's many years of separation, wandering, and near despair while focusing the action itself on the climactic events of a single day in Ephesus. But when he came to *Pericles* the playwright adopted a very different approach to his subject matter. Here, in defiance of every rule of classical drama, he chose to carry his protagonist all the way from youth to age. In keeping with this plan, he depicted episodes in no fewer than six Mediterranean locales, and he developed in each of those settings a subplot with some bearing on the themes elucidated in the work's choral passages.

Through his resurrection of John Gower to serve as guide, Shakespeare contrived to free *Pericles* even further from the constraints of classical dramaturgy. The old poet is a literary incarnation of the Middle Ages, and the tale he tells is one that was

mouldy long before he first related it. As he addresses his seven choruses to us, then, Gower gives voice to an expanse of space and time that links the present with the entirety of human history. Under the tutelage of this venerable authority we revisit a past that includes not only the flowering of chivalry (as exhibited in the jousting tournament that permits a knightly Pericles to win the hand of his bride) and the reign of such pre-Christian deities as the Sea God Neptune and the Moon Goddess Diana, but such unchanging features of the urban landscape as a bawdy-house in ancient Mitylene that must have seemed virtually indistinguishable from the Bankside brothels that stood adjacent to Shakespeare's own Globe.

For the name of his hero the playwright probably took a hint from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593), which included a Pyrocles. But he also knew about the Athenian Pericles (an eminent statesman who had ruled his city during its golden age from 495 to 429 B.C.), and it is more than likely that he deliberately chose the spelling that meant "far-famed" in Greek. In all probability he also expected his audience to pick up on the implications of the Latin word *periculum*, which meant "peril, trial, or adventure."

The *Pericles* of Shakespeare's play begins his career as "a bold Champion," a "Man on whom Perfections wait" (I.ii.60, 79). Almost immediately, however, he discovers that he is destined to be a man "the Waters and the Wind" will batter like a ball in some "vast Tennis-court" (II.ii.63–64). Every once in a while, "tir'd with doing Bad," Fortune tosses him "ashore, to give him Glad" (II.i.44–45). But by the time he arrives at Ephesus for the episode that concludes the play, the protagonist has been beaten down so

repeatedly that he is incapable of believing that even the Gods' "present Kindness" can be anything more than a trick—a device to make his "past Mis'ries" seem like "Sports" (V.iv.38) in comparison with the suffering yet to be inflicted on him.

Like Job, Pericles is a virtuous man whose trials appear totally unwarranted. And like his Old Testament prototype, he is continually prompted to ask why the Gods "make us love" their "goodly Gifts" and then "snatch them straight away" (III.ii.23–24). No more than Job does Pericles receive an answer to his question. But just before he yields completely to the despair that threatens to engulf him, the ragged old ruler is restored to hope by a daughter he'd earlier mourned for dead. Shortly thereafter, astonished by the reappearance of a wife whose corpse he'd long since bequeathed to "th' unfriendly Elements" (III.ii.54), he is renewed in his faith as well.

In a way that parallels the deliverance of his loved ones, then, Pericles is ultimately "preferr'd from fell Destruction's Blast" (V.v.5) and arrayed in the "fresh Garments" (V.ii.196) that signify spiritual regeneration. Then as his long nightmare at last gives way to a beneficent dream, he is directed to the same setting that Shakespeare had chosen for the reunion that draws *The Comedy of Errors* to a close. It is there that the final "Miracle" takes place (V.iv.55), and a man who has endured the worst that Fortune could do to him is "crown'd with Joy at last" (V.v.4–6).

TIMON OF ATHENS

