

CHRISTIAN PATTERNS IN CYMBELINE

A Thesis

Presented to

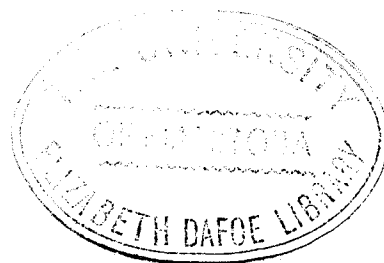
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Katherine Thomas

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AN ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to demonstrate a particular kind of mythopoeic structure in Shakespeare's Cymbeline, a structure which is specifically Christian, and which simultaneously implies similar archetypal constructs in the body of Shakespeare's romances. The essay is, in other words, a close analysis of Cymbeline in a perspective which is generally archetypal, and which perhaps indicates something of an organizing principle in the total form of what is usually called Shakespeare's last or "romantic" phase.

The introduction attempts to outline briefly the cyclical character of nature myths from the point of view of critical theory, and their relation to several aspects of the Shakespeare canon. From Shakespeare's point of view, the Christian myth at once contains and transcends the typical shape of nature myth and so an examination of the Christian doctrine of fall and redemption has been included.

The body of the work tries to demonstrate this construct through a close examination of the text with particular emphasis on language and archetypal imagery. The play has been approached for the most part sequentially in order to illustrate as clearly as possible the Christian movement from sin and death to forgiveness and redemption.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Of Shakespeare's last plays, Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest are all open, in varying degrees, to a Christian interpretation of their themes. In terms of structure however, both Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale follow simply and clearly the Christian pattern of sin, loss, repentance, and mercy and restoration. Both plays are also concerned with the relation between God (seen as a pagan deity), man, and nature. In each case there is a withdrawal into nature which heralds the awakening of the forces of regeneration that will ultimately return to human society and bring about restoration through the grace of God.

Both Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale have received a great deal of critical attention in the last thirty years. Through a close study of the imagery and the thematic structure of the plays, critics like G. Wilson Knight have come to see them as cyclical, embodying a movement from a high point, through fall, reascendence, and ultimately transcendence. They have observed how Shakespeare has brought natural, classical and Christian imagery into the plays to strengthen this structure and has given them, in each case, a "divine providence" which rules over the action and

guarantees, as we shall, see a "comic vision."

In The Winter's Tale Knight sees this special force as Apollo or the sun, "great creating nature.". When Adam was thrust out of Eden, he found himself in a nature that was like him, fallen--a nature forever, indifferently changing through the cycle of the vegetable world. For man, as mortal, nature was now on a level beneath him, foreign and hostile. In Eden, which was a place of harmonious unity and not of separate levels, nature had been imprinted with the order of the human mind. It was Adam who named the animals and pruned the Garden. And still, east of Eden, man attempts to regain this control. Through works of the human imagination, art, education, and law, he tries to tame nature--to change a wilderness once more into a cultivated garden. Thus for man, nature is two-fold. On the one hand, it is the world of mutability, decaying, dying; on the other, a world where the human imagination can attempt to transcend the cycle and create anew the Garden. As Polixenes says in The Winter's Tale, "art itself is nature" (IV,iv,1.96), but it is nature on a higher, a human level.

Above this two-fold nature is the order of grace; the mercy that is given man through the death of Christ which makes it possible for him to succeed in reaching Eden once more. Only when the spirit of man reflects the divine image can his human efforts be creative. When man is cut

off from his spiritual source in God, his will comes under the control of his appetites. His imagination is distorted and it perverts law, art and education to demonic ends. Nature, in Eden controlled by God through human imagination, now takes on man's fallen image and becomes evil and threatening.

The structures of both Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale, involving as they do a pattern of temptation, failure and yielding to evil, of repentance, penance and finally forgiveness and restoration, have led some critics to identify this pattern with aspects of the Christian story of fall, mercy and redemption. It was H.L. Bethel who first plotted the map of specific Christian concepts for The Winter's Tale in such remarks as:

The return of the supposed dead to life certainly suggests the doctrine of the resurrection; no doubt Shakespeare is thinking of life after death, but there may also be a hint of the Pauline doctrine in which Christian life on earth is a resurrected life, baptism implying the death of the 'old man' and a new birth in Christ.¹

Other critics like Wilson Knight and H.V. Matthews have seen a definite relation between the order of fallen nature and the order of divine grace. Matthews says of the plays that

The Christian concept of mercy is never abandoned; it is indeed reinstated and developed but it is conflated with another: the necessary acceptance of the recurring life-cycle of man as part of nature. Life continues, and its perpetual renewal is accepted while the concept of perpetual damnation is refused. It is the marriage of the

figure of natural magic with the accumulated virtues of the Christian ethos which gives to the last plays their extraordinary potency.²

Thus when the statue of Hermione comes to life in the last act of The Winter's Tale, we have a union of nature, art and supernatural grace, together reaching back to Eden and finding "that which is lost" (III,ii,1.137).

Of course the application of Christian doctrine can be carried too far in attempting to align historical Christian detail with the narrative of the plays. J.A. Bryant, for example, maintains that Leontes symbolizes the Jew of the Old Testament, Mamillius the first Jewish church which, though beloved, must be denied by Christianity; and Perdita the true church. Thus he says:

In the first scene in a world divided into Jew (Leontes) and Gentile (Polixenes) the promised Messiah (Hermione) having come to the Jew first made invitation to the brother also.³

Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale are not strictly allegories. They are associated with aspects of Christian doctrine, but such attempts as Bryant's at specific identification are forced and ludicrous.

As already stated, the plays, on examination, combine natural, classical, and Christian religious imagery. Thematically, as we shall see, the Christian cycle incorporates the natural and the classical. So it is to the natural cycle that we must first turn to discover, in the origin of

fertility myths, the pagan and Christian concepts which dominate the plays. Only then can we see how the Christian incorporates and ultimately transcends the others and frees man from his bondage to the ever-changing wheel of nature.

Northrop Frye, in his study of the nature of myths, has made an attempt to relate their patterns to form a literary structure.

In the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year and the organic cycle of human life, there is a single pattern of significance out of which myth constructs a central narrative around a figure who is partly the sun, partly the vegetable fertility and partly a god or archetypal human being.⁴

In early days, man worshipped the sun, praying each night in the fearful darkness that the omnipotent god would rise again. Similarly, the first religions were designed to appease nature gods and to assure the seasonal cycle of nature itself. Thus each fall, a male was sacrificed to Mother Earth and his blood, sprinkled on the ground, assured the rebirth of spring after the death of vegetable life in the winter. It was thought that the male, when united with the female earth, wrought the fertility of the spring season. This structural form was then adapted in classical legend into such myths as that of Adonis, the dying god, who, destroyed by nature in the figure of the boar, was turned by Venus into a flower and so was reborn. The female counterpart in classical mythology was Proserpine, the goddess of

vegetative fertility, who was stolen by Pluto, the god of the underworld, and forced to spend with him under the earth the six months of the year that man knows as autumn and winter. In this way the ancients accounted for the change of the seasons, relating the individual man both physically and spiritually to his environment. The details of the fertility myth had been changed but its form remained the same. Within this form can be placed also the story of Christ, whose blood was spilt in order that man might be reborn. But obviously, the myth has changed significantly: it has become not only a matter of physical rebirth in time but also one of spiritual rebirth in eternity. Of course some pagan religions postulated both a physical and a spiritual rebirth in the idea of a continuing existence. The physical cycle of nature remained eternal, but at least pagan man could spiritually transcend his own personal existence to become part of a greater movement, though bound to the wheel of generation forever. The nature of Christian transcendence and therefore the meaning of spiritual rebirth in biblical terms is very different. Christianity perceives the nature of man's evil in greater depth than other religions and consequently places a greater emphasis on the necessity of God's love acting to overcome original sin. Spiritual rebirth is seen as a personal participation in God's love. Through spiritual identification with God, man can transcend nature, the ever-turning wheel of generation, and through

God's love he can recreate nature in His image.

Northrop Frye has divided myths into four phases of the wheel that correspond closely to the Christian journey:

1. The dawn, spring and birth phase. Myths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation and (because the four phases are a cycle) of the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter and death. Subordinate characters: the father and the mother. The archetype of romance and of most dithyrambic and rhapsodic poetry.
2. The zenith, summer and marriage or triumph phase. Myths of apotheosis, of the sacred marriage and of entering into Paradise. Subordinate characters: the companion and the bride. The archetype of comedy, pastoral, and idyll.
3. The sunset, autumn and death phase. Myths of fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice and of the isolation of the hero. Subordinate characters: the traitor and the siren. The archetype of tragedy and of elegy.
4. The darkness, winter and dissolution phase. Myths of the triumph of these powers; myths of floods and the return of chaos, of the defeat of the hero and the Gotterdammerung myths. Subordinate characters: the ogre and the witch. The type of satire...⁵

In terms of this structure, the title character of Cymbeline is already at the nadir of the circle when the play opens. Posthumus and Imogen, momentarily on top, are about to begin the fall that will carry them to the bottom and then back up to the zenith again. In The Winter's Tale, where the function of both Cymbeline and Posthumus is combined in the figure of Leontes, the play begins in the sunset, autumn phase and moves through the cycle. In the first scenes however it does give us a glimpse, through the memories of the characters, of the spring and summer phase. Thus while the plays are concentrated on the turn through fall to

rebirth, the audience is presented with a picture of the spring and summer phase, from which the action falls away and to which it will return.

The comic vision, of course, moves from the top of the wheel, down and up again; the tragic vision moves in reverse. Frye sees certain archetypal symbols as belonging to the comic vision and others as belonging to the tragic. The one set of symbols, he calls apocalyptic because they are all types, as we shall see, of the divine, of Christ. The other he calls demonic because they are all types of evil, of Satan.⁶

The fallen world is divided into five levels: human, animal, vegetable, mineral and the unformed world. On the human level images belonging to the comic vision as Frye sees them are the forms of civilized society: law, order, art, and the harmony that is symbolized in marriage, where the bridegroom and his bride, like Christ and his Church, become one. Thus we find that Shakespeare's comedies usually end in one or multiple marriages. The demonic counterpart in the tragic vision is the society that has been perverted either to tyranny or anarchy, the adulterous marriage, like Gertrude's in Hamlet, and the unnatural mother-- Lady Macbeth.

On the animal level, the apocalyptic types are the lamb, or a flock of sheep or domesticated animals, and the dove (Imogen, Posthumus and the royal boys in Cymbeline are

described metaphorically as birds); the demonic are destructive creatures like the wolf, the serpent, the dragon and the image of the spider that appears in the diseased mind of Leontes in The Winter's Tale.

On the vegetable level there is the Garden and the tree of life: the pastoral world of the sheep-shearing festival in The Winter's Tale, and the green forest of Arden in As You Like It. Contrasted to this are the demonic symbols of nature run wild: the wilderness of Wales in Cymbeline, the stormy heath in King Lear and the tree of death.

On the mineral level, the comic vision is of a city like the New Jerusalem, of a temple or of a precious jewel like the diamond Imogen gives Posthumus. In the tragic vision, the demonic types are stones like the statue of Hermione, deserts, rocks like those of the rugged coastline of Bohemia, labyrinths and prisons like the cells where Claudio and Barnardine await death in Measure for Measure.

On the level of the unformed world, the comic vision is of one river, the river of life that we find in The Pearl; its demonic counterpart is "that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea"⁷, the world of chaotic tempests and of sea monsters like the Leviathan.

But because the dominating structural symbol is a circle and not a straight line, the very images and symbols of chaos and destruction are often signs of a soon-to-come

regeneration, as in the third book of Spenser's The Faerie Queene, where the possibility of rebirth is only found when one is caught like Florimel in the very bottom of the destructive cosmos.

In plays such as Shakespeare's early comedies the vision is obviously comic as is the structure and the imagery. In the world of the tragedies, of Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth, the tragic vision pervades all. But because of the cyclical character of nature myth (and all fiction is displaced myth⁸), comedies like As You Like It and The Comedy of Errors are motivated by threats of a horrible death, and Twelfth Night begins with a tempest. The fact that it is Oliver, the original threatener of death in As You Like It, who is later nearly killed by a lion, is another indication of the cyclical pattern. On the other hand, in Macbeth, nature itself rebels, and the forest, which one would expect to be evil, takes on human form and becomes redemptive. In Hamlet also there are constant references to a Garden world (though in its fallen, corrupted state) which is glimpsed but never reached. In Shakespeare's canon, Hamlet and King Lear contain the complete tragic vision. All the characters move downward. The central character may gain self-knowledge but as an individual he is ultimately powerless against the demonic forces that rule his world: Fortinbras becomes King of Denmark, Cordelia dies. Macbeth, on the other hand, represents a turning point; evil is fought,

overcome and replaced with the promise of a green world.

Thus in Cymbeline, the forces of restoration are mustered in the harsh wilderness of Wales; in The Winter's Tale they come to power on the rugged coast of Bohemia after a tempest. The last plays of Shakespeare offer the most fully realized vision of the cycle. Though they are comic, they contain within them not just glimpses of a tragic world like the earlier comedies, but the whole tragic vision. Thus they make a complete turn of the wheel and in the end transcend it--and the nature of this transcendancy is Christian.

Christianity, as we have stated, absorbs natural and classical religion, but it also goes beyond it. Thus, while Christ fits the pattern of the archetypal fertility god, he brings spiritual as well as physical rebirth. Christ is, of course, the Word made Flesh, and the New Testament emphasizes strongly the fact that He descends into the fallen world, the world of generation. He is crucified within it but His crucifixion serves to open a way out of the cycle of fallen nature. His promise to man is not only the grace that will confer a rebirth in God after death, but also a spiritual rebirth, through identification with the Eternal, within the very confines of the earthly world. It is this promise that enables man to transcend the fallen world while still physically in it.

Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale are concerned with

this transcendancy, but the initial action is identified with man's fall into sin and the nature of the evil that finally calls forth the power of grace. What is the nature of the Christian doctrine of the fall? How did man come to leave his state of innocence in the Garden and to what extent is he responsible for his present condition?

One of the great contemporary Protestant theologians, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, gives a detailed explication of the first chapters of Genesis in his book, Creation and Fall. In the middle of the Garden of Eden, Genesis tells us, are two trees--the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam, says Bonhoeffer, is not in the centre of his world, the Garden; in the centre are the two trees. The tree of life symbolizes the life that comes to Adam from the middle of his existence, his creator God. Adam receives life from this middle; but he does not possess it. It is not his to take.

The other tree, also in the middle of the Garden and of Adam's existence, has a prohibition attached to it. Adam is forbidden to eat of it and is threatened with death if he transgresses this commandment. Bonhoeffer says of this prohibition:

Certainly Adam cannot know what death, or good, or evil are, but Adam understands that in these words God confronts him and points out his limit....that is to say, his creatureliness. In the prohibition Adam is addressed in his creatureliness, and by the prohibition his being is confirmed in its kind.⁹

The forbidden tree which stands with the tree of life in the middle of Adam's existence denotes his limit, his creatureliness--the point beyond which he cannot go if he is to remain a creature of God. Thus God is at once the limit, the life and the middle of man's existence. In other words, man's life and freedom are only possible in terms of obedience--an obedience recognized in the Garden as grace. God is our limit. When we encounter God we see Him as Creator and ourselves as creatures. This is our limit. We cannot be our own creator. The limit is God Himself--His nature. Through Him we see what we are not and so we see our limit. To die means to live without God as the middle, the centre of our existence--it is to be caught in a trap where man, who is not God, has the knowledge of good and evil but not the power to restrain his own will from perverting that knowledge. That is to say, he does have God's knowledge, but because his true nature is a union of spirit and appetite, his will can become infected by the latter and override or distort this knowledge to its own ends.

Adam and Eve have succumbed to the temptation of the serpent long before they eat the apple. Their sin is originally one of thought and only afterwards one of action. The serpent's first words to Eve are "Did God say 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1) As Bonhoeffer has demonstrated, the very nature of the question suggests to man that he is in a position to judge

whether an ordinance is the Word of God or not. The moment this doubt appears, man's original obedience and trust in his Creator is lost. It suggests to him that his own mind is capable of distinguishing and judging the words of his Creator. Immediately he sees himself as having a power equal to that of God. Obedience to his Creator, which in his unfallen state appeared as love attendant on God's grace, is now seen as a limit placed by a jealous, tyrannical god to prevent him from moving beyond his position as creature. The serpent promises Eve that she will be like God when she gains the knowledge of the tree of death. And man is like God, but this new position entails the loss of guidance from a higher spiritual authority outside himself. Now he must stand quite alone:

To be in the middle and to be alone means to be like God. Man is sicut deus. Now he lives out of himself, now he creates his own life, he is his own creator....He is like God....The fall really makes a creator, the sicut deus man, out of the creature, the imageo dei man.¹⁰

Man, in this position, is like Phaeton who cannot control the reigns of his Father's chariot. Man may have the same knowledge as God, but he is not all spirit, all essence. His head may be in the heavens but his feet are on the ground. And while he has now become the centre of himself and of his world, this centre is open to the forces of his rebellious will, a will controlled by appetite. Another eminent Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich has

described how, as soon as man turns away from his Creator and sets himself up in that position, he has fallen into hubris or the pride of self-elevation. Man begins to worship himself as God and immediately his lower nature gains control and the result is concupiscence. Concupiscence as Tillich defines it is

...the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self. It refers to all aspects of man's relation to himself and to his world. It refers to physical hunger as well as to sex, to knowledge as well as to power, to material wealth as well as to spiritual values.¹¹

This is ultimately a state of death because it is a condition that can never be fulfilled and can therefore never be satisfied. Thus for Faust, a type of fallen man lusting for absolute knowledge, his quest is from the beginning hopeless. There is never enough food for man's ego. Don Juan and Casanova cannot find any satisfaction in their sexual conquests because they are not seeking love or even sexual satisfaction from a woman but only proof to fortify their narcissistic image of themselves as powerful lovers. There is no longer any quality to sex but only quantity and the inevitable result is frustration and death.

In actual fact, while man may be convinced that as a creator he is truly free, he becomes a prisoner to the desires of his own ego. His view of the world is no longer a reflection of the eyes of God but rather a vision that has been distorted by his appetite-infected will. People around

him are no longer seen as themselves but as part of his self. He has projected his own desires onto those around him and he can only see them through the hazy glasses of his ego. Thus man turned away from God is unable to distinguish between non-subjective spiritual truth and self-created illusion.

We have seen how man attempts to create a new Garden through such human institutions as education, art and law. But when these institutions are not governed by God, that is by a higher eternal divinity, they become not means of reaching God's Paradise but ends in themselves. Man has created these institutions and because they are his own creations he begins to worship them, to see them as actual manifestations of his new-found power. "He attributes infinite significance to his finite cultural creations, making idols of them, elevating them into matters of ultimate concern".¹² He no longer worships the eternal divinity of God; but in his estranged state, his temporal creations become examples of his own divinity.

Then his own sinfulness perverts the law, makes it a demonic means for his own selfish ends. The spirit behind the law is lost; the letter remains, cold and dead. The law which was originally a creative, imaginative attempt to form mankind into a higher moral society becomes a frozen law of stone commandments; of the bondage of "Thou shalt not". It has become fixed and unchanging and therefore as open to evil as to good.

Through their distorted vision, Leontes, Cymbeline and Posthumus see the law as evidence of their righteousness. They judge others by the letter of the law, by material proof, and not by the spirit, by faith. Like Othello, they demand the kind of material evidence to support their suspicions that would be necessary in a law-court. Once they have this proof they believe that they are administering a just punishment, but it is soon apparent that the law has been used as a means of revenge. It allows man's appetite-infected will to hide under a veneer of social approval.

By the law we know what sin is in order to avoid it, but our own evil abuses that knowledge by misapplying it. Then the law becomes a means to sin as well as a means of knowing sin. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay I had not known sin, but by the law. For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead. (7:7-8)

Man enters the world under the burden of original sin. This means that man is not born sinful but that he is born with the potentiality of sinfulness which he soon actualizes. The fall has mythically already happened but every man re-enacts it. Man does not know Eden. For him it is not an actual state but only what Tillich calls a state of "dreaming innocence."¹³ It is a lost potential

in a fallen world. Man projects this mythic state on to childhood because children lack both the experience of good and evil and the attendant feelings of guilt. But the innocence of children is not an actual unfallen state, it is only a mythic projection of the only analogy available to man in the fallen world. Once this analogy is accepted, however, and used in literature, the child's inevitable fall into experience is, like the original fall, a movement away from his Creator, which takes the form of hubris or self-elevation, followed by concupiscence with its attendant blindness to spiritual truth and dependence on the law and empirical fact alone.

This inability to distinguish between appearance and truth is a central theme of all literature, where good and evil are often disguised as opposites. In Paradise Lost, sin is pictured, like Spenser's dragon of error, as attractive on the surface and hideous and reptilian beneath. This is the nature of sin in the fallen world--a world where the external appearance of nobility does not necessarily indicate corresponding internal virtues as they did originally in the Garden. It is significant in this aspect that once man turned away from God in Eden, he disguised his body with leaves. Already he used nature to hide himself further from God.

In man's estrangement from God, time also becomes demonic--a process of never-ending change and destruction

that results ultimately in the death of the god-self.

Man's evil is limited by the fact that even with the powers of the Creator, he is finite and mortal. When he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, his punishment was death--not only a physical death but also a spiritual one that began at the moment when he was no longer guided by or able to identify himself with an infinite, eternal Godhead. It is the coming of Christ into the world that changes all this, redeeming man, time, nature and the human institutions that now control the sicut deus man. Christ's death and resurrection give man the chance to identify himself with Him, die with Him, and be spiritually and ultimately reborn in Him. Christ destroys death on the cross. Through this grace man is once more a part of an immortal spiritual centre and the cycle of time and generation no longer has control over him. Spiritually reborn in Christ, he shares the nature of Christ's transcendence and through Christ's love the powers of evil, fed by his own ego, are defeated. Man's vision, once more seen from the perspective of eternity, becomes clear again; his self-created illusions and spiritual truth become one. His institutions like law and education now have a spiritual value beyond their temporal form, and concupiscence lessens because man has no desire to draw everything into his own centre but sees all persons and things including himself as under the dominion of God. He can love another person,

not because he needs to possess that person, but because God's love for him is a love that he wants to share with all mankind.

In Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale it is the hero who moves through the Christian cycle of fall, repentance and forgiveness and ultimately transcends it. And he transcends it through the grace of God which uses a female as a human agent for divine providence. The women in the last plays appear as the two types of Eve: the first Eve, the temptress and, with Adam, the destroyer of the Garden, and Mary, born of the first couple, who as the second Eve gives birth to Christ, the second Adam--the restorer of the Garden. The two types of Eve are further divided in some cases into mothers and daughters. Thus matron types of the first Eve are Dionyza in Pericles, the witch-like queen in Cymbeline, and the witch Sycorax in The Tempest. The only daughter type is the unnamed, evil, incestuous princess of Antioch in Pericles. Matron types of Mary, the second Eve, are Thaisa in Pericles (actually in the time progression of the play both daughter and mother), and Hermione in The Winter's Tale. Daughter types are the chaste Marina in Pericles, the loyal Imogen in Cymbeline, the innocent Perdita of The Winter's Tale and Miranda of The Tempest.

Shakespeare has made an interesting division of the two archetypal figures in Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale, a division that is related to the theme of youth and old age.

In Cymbeline, the type of Adam is divided into the old king who begins the play surrounded by the evil he has caused, and the young man, Posthumus, who is driven, because of this evil, to make the same downward journey into sin. In The Winter's Tale the type of Adam is seen in the middle-aged figures of Leontes and Polixenes. In the same play, the female figure who is a type of redeeming Eve, is divided into the virginal, innocent Perdita and the experienced mother, Hermione. In Cymbeline, the two figures are drawn together into Imogen who is a mixture of innocence and maturity. Like Hermione she has the courage to fight alone against injustice, and like Perdita she appears throughout the play as a figure of chaste, regenerative youth. In Cymbeline, it is the figures of the young bride and bridegroom who dominate and control the action. In The Winter's Tale, the young lovers are subordinate and are ultimately taken up into the older figures of the father and mother.

When Cymbeline begins, the old king is at the bottom of the cycle--in the winter phase of dissolution and chaos. His court is a corrupt prison where evil is accepted as virtue and even the courtiers are forced into the pretense of following the king. Cymbeline is unnatural, blind to spiritual truth. As a result he is neither a real father nor a real king. Before the opening of the play, his blindness has resulted in the banishment of Belarius, whose 'treason' he has accepted at face value, ignoring his loyalty of many years. This blindness has resulted in the loss of his two

heirs. He has accepted the Queen and Cloten also at face value and persuaded by them, he has turned against Rome to which he owes fealty and now seeks the freedom of Britain as a means of gaining more power for himself.

Thus when the play opens Cymbeline has already cast out good and turned to evil. But time moves on and virtue once more comes to flower within the very walls of the corrupt court. But Cymbeline, an impotent Fisher King in the wasteland of his own creation, now proceeds to destroy the redeeming forces of youthful love. The marriage of his daughter Imogen to Posthumus is a harmonious union of the spiritual and the physical. In their unfallen innocence they symbolize a rebirth of all the virtues Cymbeline has rejected. But Cymbeline in his fallen self-centredness is still blind to good. He judges Posthumus, as he has judged all the characters in the court, only by his external appearance--a judgement suggested by his own distorted vision which prizes material and physical worth above inner, spiritual nobility. Because Posthumus, though described by the courtiers as the epitome of noble manhood, is base-born, he banishes him from his kingdom and keeps Imogen a pale prisoner.

The love of Imogen and Posthumus is a jewel hidden in the stony walls of Cymbeline's court. Their love is a union of the spiritual and the religious with the material and the commercial; it is a union of lion-hearted bravery

and gentle tenderness, and, as Wilson Knight has suggested, a union on a national level of Rome and Britain.¹⁴ Imogen is the flower of British womanhood; Posthumus' name is Roman and he has been born under the star of Jove--Rome's highest deity. Their love has the spiritual radiance of the diamond Imogen gives to Posthumus and they both know that it is the spiritual strength of their love that makes the diamond shine. There is no false illusion in their love; the spiritual and the physical correspond, but they are also kept in their proper order of importance.

But when Cymbeline banishes Posthumus, he has banished him from his paradise in Imogen and cast him into a hostile fallen world full of temptations. Posthumus remains uncorrupted until he falls victim to the wiles of Iachimo. Iachimo, as his name indicates, is kin to Iago in Othello, and his means of destroying Posthumus' belief in the chaste Imogen correspond to Iago's destruction of Othello's trust in Desdemona. Iachimo, like Iago, believes that all love can be reduced to physical terms. He succeeds in reducing Posthumus' love for Imogen to a matter of her chastity--a physical state. As Iachimo says, Posthumus comes to believe that Imogen, a human being, is equal to an object, the diamond she has given him. Through his hubris, his pride in her as his own possession, his vision becomes as distorted as Cymbeline's. Reduced to this level, Posthumus, like Iachimo, demands physical, material proof

that his property is intact. He is so blind that he thinks nothing of deceiving her with a letter describing Iachimo as noble--it is only bait for his trap. And when Iachimo returns, Posthumus accepts the bracelet without hesitation as proof of her infidelity. He does not need Iachimo's final evidence, a description of the mole on Imogen's breast. He has reached not only a state where he is unable to see beyond physical deception to accept Imogen's love as a sign of her chastity, but also one where even her physical being has been reduced to that of an inanimate object. When she becomes an object in his possession, the bracelet is ample proof that the object has been spoiled. Judging her on this level, he determines in his diseased mind that she must be punished with death. As in Othello, justice becomes an excuse for revenge.

Posthumus has fallen, but Imogen remains spiritually and physically true to him. Pisanio, like Belarius, a type of faithful servant, recognizes that Posthumus' mind is diseased. His eyes remain clear and he cannot bring himself to carry out his master's horrible command. He advises Imogen, who has been stripped by Posthumus of her womanhood, to disguise herself as a page and to seek help from Caius Lucius, her father's enemy and commander of the Roman forces.

The court of Cymbeline, as we have seen, is demonic. It is here that false illusion has become so strong that flowers are used to hide poison. Imogen, cast out of the

court by her lover who has been tempted by the civilized world into betrayal, must now seek help in the rugged wilderness of savage nature and from an apparent enemy. But it is in her disguise as Fidele that she unknowingly discovers her lost brothers, and it is in the wilderness that the forces of regeneration are mustered.

Wales, with its caves and wild crags, seems to be a place for outlaws. But it is here within the dark cave that the two royal boys have been nurtured by Nature. Rather than suppressing or destroying their inherent nobility, she has brought it to flower. Their cave is not a dark, evil place of destructive powers like Archimago's in Book One of The Faerie Queene. It is more like Merlin's cave in Book Three, where Britomart descends into the bowels of the earth in order to find a means of rising again. The creative power of nature has flourished among the crags, producing the natural bravery of Polydore and the imaginative art of Cadwal. The wilderness appears, as Belarius is so fond of pointing out, a much better place than the evil court. But on the other hand, the two boys speak of their natural environment as a prison where they are kept in bondage, unable to fly. Shakespeare is showing us how the world of human society and the world of nature are incomplete when cut off from each other. It is only when nature is brought once more to its proper place under human control that the wilderness becomes a garden; and it is only when the sterile,

fixed human forms are once more brought to life by the energy of nature, that they become creative and life-giving.

The turning point of the play is reached at the moment of seeming complete destruction. Imogen is apparently dead, killed by poison. Posthumus' desire for revenge has been carried out through the agency of the evil queen. And dying beside her, as R.G. Hunter points out,¹⁴ is the sinful Posthumus himself. Posthumus has sunk to the level of Cloten, in whose distorted mind the only thought is to seek vengeance on Imogen. In Posthumus' garments, with his head cut off (significantly the seat of the spirit), he is recognized by Imogen as her lover. Imogen has revived under the restorative cordial that Cornelius had given the queen instead of the poison that she had demanded, and from this low point the action moves upwards.

Both Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale are ruled by a classical god, in the former, Jupiter and, in the latter, Apollo. Shakespeare's choice is significant. Jupiter as head deity of the Roman gods, relates the plight of individuals to that of nations. Apollo as the sun god relates the condition of mankind to the regenerative forces of nature. In both plays, however, the gods are related to both nation and nature, though as suggested, with a different emphasis. Both classical deities are identified with God, who crosses man because he loves him, and in both plays the necessary repentance of evil and the divine forgiveness

that follows are as closely identified with the doctrine of Christianity as was the nature of the hero's fall.

It has been pointed out by a number of critics, particularly R.E. Moffat, that Christ was historically supposed to have been born in the reign of Cymbeline. Moffat sees the whole redemptive movement of the play as preparation for the Nativity:

The reign of Cymbeline is of unique importance because it is to see the birth of the saviour of mankind, thus the central idea will be the need of mankind for a saviour; the content of the play 'holding up a mirror' to reflect in little the essential truths of the theatre of the world-- will show the straits into which men have fallen as a result of sin, error and misfortune, followed by a supernaturally effected restoration and reconciliation which will be both an imperfect analogue of the full restoration to come and a fitting preparation and greeting for the divine child soon to be born, 'peace upon earth, goodwill towards men'.¹⁵

The movement towards restoration has really begun with the removal of the action to Wales and the discovery that the heirs of Cymbeline are alive. The individual redemption of Posthumus begins when he is presented with the bloody cloth and when, for the first time, he feels remorse. Still believing that Imogen has betrayed him, he now forgives her. Her fault appears as nothing when he sees the size of the beam in his own eye. Now he wants only to die, and when he fails to be killed fighting valiantly against the Romans he gives himself up to the victorious Britons as one of the enemy. On the national level,

Posthumus with Belarius and the two royal boys have saved Britain--all the virtues that Cymbeline has cast out of his kingdom have returned to save his kingship.

Meanwhile Posthumus is in prison, a physical bondage that symbolizes his spiritual bondage. There he repents of his evil and asks only for death as a means both of liberation for himself and as payment for his faults. By repenting, Posthumus has turned once more to a spiritual authority outside himself, and now he is able to receive God's mercy in the vision of Jupiter. He awakens, "a man new made" with the promise of forgiveness and restoration found in the "rare" book.

Divine providence has been at work throughout the play. When Posthumus, disguised as a peasant, has fought against Iachimo in the battle, he vanquished him but spared his life. Iachimo's eyes are now opened and he sees that physical appearance has no relation to inner nobility. Unlike Iago, he now repents of the wrong he has done Imogen. By sparing his life Posthumus has opened the door to his own redemption, for Iachimo confesses his evil at the feet of Cymbeline. When Imogen, who has throughout remained faithful, is restored to him, a living example of God's grace, Posthumus can forgive Iachimo as Jupiter has forgiven him.

This display of mercy causes Cymbeline, who, like Posthumus, has been made to see the evil he has done, to

pardon all. His eyes have been opened to the true character of the queen and of Belarius. He has repented of his evil and called on heaven to mend all, and now with the restoration of his heirs, he also has evidence of God's grace. Now all are united, the bridegroom and the bride, the king and his subject, the father and his child. Posthumus and Cymbeline have once more turned to God and they share in his immortality. Spiritually reborn in Christ's mercy, they are no longer caught in a temporal world, but share with Him the new Paradise that is eternal. Similarly, Britain pays tribute to her father Rome and by doing so becomes heir to Rome's heritage and power. Whether this reconciliation indicates Shakespeare's belief that English culture is heir to the classical tradition, or that the Church of England is the rejuvenated Roman Catholic church, it once more unites father and son in harmony and peace.

II

THE CLOYED WILL

In the first scene of the play there is a juxtaposition of the old evil forces of Cymbeline's corrupted court and the youthful innocence and harmony of the marriage of Imogen and Posthumus. The note of disorder, false-semblance and dissolution in the court is apparent in the first line of the play. The first gentleman says, "You do not meet a man but frowns: our bloods/No more obey the heavens than our courtiers/Still seem as does the king" (I,i,11.1-3). The disorder is both universal and particular. Man stained with original sin has turned away from proper obedience to the heavens even as the courtiers have turned away from obedience to the king, the spiritual authority on earth, and only seem to frown with him. Cymbeline, infected with the poison of his evil, has turned away from the heavens; it is for this reason that the courtiers have turned away from him, to reassert the supremacy of a divine spiritual authority. They are all glad of Imogen's marriage to Posthumus, "a poor but worthy gentleman" (I,i,1.7). Unlike Cymbeline they are able to distinguish worthiness as a spiritual rather than a material quality, but they must follow his lead and hide truth under a show of seeming.

But not a courtier
 Although they wear their faces to the bent
 Of the king's looks, hath a heart that is not
 Glad at the thing they scowl at.

(I,i,1.12)

The image of clothing as a superficial disguise for truth is one of the most important of the play: an indication that evil results in a distorted vision and an inability to penetrate disguise and illusion.

The first gentleman then presents us with a picture of Posthumus as the epitome of perfect manhood—man in his most blessed form. Posthumus

is a creature such
 As, to seek through the regions of the earth
 For one his like, there would be something failing
 In him that should compare. I do not think
So fair an outward and such stuff within
 Endows a man but he.

(I,i,11.19-24)

Posthumus, envisioned as the perfect man, is seen at this point as a type of unfallen Adam. He knows no evil; his outward appearance is equalled by an inner nobility and as such he stands, like Imogen, on a pinnacle above Cymbeline and his fallen court. We also learn that Posthumus, as his name implies, is the last of a noble race, the son of the lion-hearted (Leonatus), whose origin is something of a mystery. "I cannot delve him to the root" (I,i,1.28) says the first gentleman. Like Perdita in The Winter's Tale and Marina in Pericles, he has been cast adrift into the world, born as his mother died. Again the first gentleman tells us "his

gentle lady/Big of this gentleman our theme/Deceased as he was born" (I,i,11.38-40). As R.E. Moffat states, "The lack of human ties makes him stand more readily for humanity in general"¹⁶ and his sudden entry into the world is like everyman's, cast naked on the shore. Like Macduff in Macbeth, who was "from his mother's womb/Untimely ripp'd (V,viii,1.16), he seems in some magical or mystical way a redemptive force in the court of Cymbeline.

Posthumus is also identified with the unfallen harmony between man and nature and, on a national level, between Britain and Rome. His growth is natural and rewarding; he becomes an example of perfection for all and a youthful corrector of the faults of old age. The first gentleman says:

The king he takes the babe
To his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus,
Breeds him and makes him of his bed-chamber,
Puts to him all the learnings that his time
Could make him the receiver of; which he took,
As we do air, fast as 'twas minister'd,
And in's spring became a harvest, lived in court—
Which rare it is to do—most praised, most loved,
A sample to the youngest, to the more mature
A glass that feated them, and to the graver
A child that guided dotards...
(I,i,11.40-50)

In Posthumus there is a rich union of the spiritual, indicated by such words as "air" and "rare", and the natural.

Furthermore, Wilson Knight suggests that through his name, Leonatus, and his father's name, Sicilius, he is "imaginatively at least a composite of the British and the

Roman".¹⁷ We are told that he was born under the star of Jove, the reigning Roman deity, and Knight suggests that at the end of the play his change of dress from Roman to British and back again to Roman indicates this unity.

He has also been wed in Jupiter's temple and his marriage to Imogen, symbolizing as it does a union of Britain and Rome, is also symbolic of a union of all aspects of humanity: the physical and the spiritual, the religious and the commercial. Imogen, who is identified with God's mercy and forgiveness in the play, is always described in imagery suggesting spiritual essence, harmony and holiness. Described on Jupiter's tablet as a piece of tender air, she is often pictured in aerial imagery and as a winged bird. Her voice is the "tune of Imogen" (V,v,1.238) and she is constantly associated with music, the human art most closely associated with the divine harmony of the heavenly spheres. The first gentleman describes her as a goddess who has chosen Posthumus and set him apart:

Her own price
Proclaims how she esteem'd him and his virtue;
By her election may be truly read
What kind of man he is.

(I,i,11.51-54)

The imagery here is interesting because, as Derek Traversi suggests,¹⁸ it shows how in Imogen the spiritual permeates the physical, in the conjunction of the commercial word "price" and the theological word "election".

When Posthumus and Imogen are seen together this harmony becomes more evident. She gives him a jewel, a diamond, but for her he is "this jewel in the world" (I,i,1.90). Not only are the material and spiritual in an harmonious unity, but there is also an awareness of their proper order; the physical or material is second to the spiritual. Even demonic images of bondage and of prison, which are so prevalent in the fallen world of the court, become transformed by the redemptive power of their love; so that the bracelet he gives her is a "manacle of love" (I,i,1.122) and she is his "fairest prisoner" (I,i,1.123).

But the physical union has been destroyed by the tyranny of Cymbeline. Imogen is imprisoned, (The evil queen says to her, "You're my prisoner, but/Your gaoler shall deliver you the keys/That lock up your restraint" (I,i,11.71-73)), and Posthumus is banished. Imogen recognizes the queen as evil in spite of her hypocritical ways, "O/Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant/Can tickle where she wounds!" (I,i,11.84-86) but she does not fear captivity. Her love for Posthumus transcends bondage and imprisonment, but now Cymbeline's commandment will test whether the two lovers can retain this transcendancy in the face of physical separation.

Cymbeline has given in to evil forces and, accepting their guidance, has cast all virtue from his court. Filled with the hubris of kingship, he is taken in by the beautiful appearance of evil. He says at the end of the play,

when he is finally made to realize her evil nature, that he could not help but love the queen for he had seen her only with his senses and his appetite. He has relied not on heavenly wisdom but on his own ego, and his judgement has been disastrous. Love, for him as for Iachimo, has been based on the purely sensual and is devoid of any higher spirituality. He says:

Mine eyes
Were not in fault, for she was beautiful;
Mine ears that heard her flattery; nor my heart,
That thought her like her seeming; it had been vicious
To have mistrusted her: yet, O my daughter!
That it was folly in me, thou mayst say,
And prove it in thy feeling. Heaven mend all!
(V,v,11.63-69)

But at the commencement of the play Cymbeline is not looking towards heaven for help. Controlled by an infected will that, turned away from the divine, has been absorbed in feeding its own ego, his distorted vision also sees good as evil. Belarius tells Guiderius and Arviragus in Act Three why Cymbeline banished him:

My fault being nothing--as I have told you oft--
But that two villains, whose false oaths prevail'd
Before my perfect honour, swore to Cymbeline
I was confederate with the Romans...
(III,iii,11.65-68)

Again we can see the nature of Cymbeline's infected will. Material 'proof', "false oaths", is accepted as the truth above inner virtue, "perfect honour".

As a result, Cymbeline has lost his two sons, his heirs, and now he proceeds--at least metaphorically--to destroy his one daughter, Imogen, and to drive out the last vestige of noble manhood in the court, in the person of Posthumus. He

calls Posthumus, "thou basest thing" (I,i,11.126) because he lacks outward rank. In a beautiful speech, where she uses his own material values to reflect spiritual worth, Imogen corrects him:

Sir,
It is your fault that I have loved Posthumus:
You bred him as my playfellow, and he is
A man worth any woman, overbuys me
Almost the sum he pays. (I,i,11.143-147)

And again

Cymb. Thou took's't a beggar; wouldst have made my throne
A seat for baseness.
Imo. No; I had rather added
A lustre to it. (I,i,11.141-142)

Cymbeline, finding Posthumus to be a beggar in material terms, considers him therefore spiritually base also. Imogen knows differently. He is an "eagle" (a heavenly image that is associated with the divine Jupiter who is identified with the God of Christianity in the play), and Cloten, who has all the value of outward rank, is in comparison a "puttock" (I,i,1.139), an evil bird of prey. Unlike Cymbeline, Imogen recognizes Posthumus for his inherent virtue and Cloten for his inherent evil.

Cymbeline does realize that youth is a regenerative force that should repair the faults of old age. He says to Imogen, "O disloyal thing/That shouldst repair my youth,/Thou heap'st a year's age on me" (I,i,1.131). For him, she is

only a "thing", a material possession. This reduction of a human being to the level of an inanimate object will be repeated by Posthumus after his "fall". Through his own concupiscence Cymbeline also mistakes law and obedience for grace. In addressing Imogen he equates the two:

Cymb. Past grace? Obedience?

Imo. Past hope and in despair; that way, past grace.
(I,i,11.136-137)

Imogen knows that grace does not equal obedience to tyranny and that lack of grace means despair. To be without grace is to despair at being human. And Posthumus, who should revitalize Cymbeline's old blood, is attacked by him as "poison to my blood" (I,i,1.114). Despairing at the fallen, corrupted nature of the court and the king who is at its head--a society that is indeed past grace in its civilized hypocrisy which covers a labyrinth of evil, Imogen longs for heavenly restoration in the world of nature, a world that is closer to grace than Cymbeline's court. Cymbeline, whose values have been turned upside down through his own sinfulness, thinks that she is mad to value Posthumus over Cloten:

Cymb. What art thou mad?

Imo. Almost sir: heaven restore me! Would I were
A neat-herd's daughter, and my Leonatus
Our neighbour shepherd's son.
(I,i,11.148-151)

She is soon to have her wish, for Cymbeline is setting into motion forces that will ultimately drive her out of the bondage of the court to seek salvation in the wilderness of

nature. In one of the cruelest lines of the play, which shows how unnatural a father Cymbeline is, he prays in his warped mind for the destruction of his own creation--the last vestige of virtue left in his wasteland. He says to the queen, "Nay, let her languish/A drop of blood a day; and being aged,/Die of this folly!" (I,i,ll.157-159). He speaks clearer than he knows, for age and experience are signs of a turning away from heaven into pride and self-elevation that result in spiritual death.

When we meet Cloten we realize how strongly vices are upheld in Cymbeline's society. Cloten in his foolish pride has convinced himself that he has courageously cast out the villainous Posthumus. In the flattering speeches of the first lord in Act One, scene two, Shakespeare shows us how Cloten's evil will that turns truth into falsehood is upheld by the courtiers that follow Cymbeline. But he also indicates the real feelings of the courtiers and their true opinion of Cloten, in the slighting asides of the second lord. Like Cymbeline, Cloten turns all that is holy into sin:

Clo. And that she should love this fellow and refuse me!

Sec.Lord. (aside) If it be a sin to make a true election she is damned.

First Lord. Sir, as I told you always, her beauty and her brain go not together: she's a good sign, but I have seen small reflection of her wit.

Sec.Lord. (aside) She shines not upon fools, lest the reflection should hurt her.

(I,ii,ll.29-34)

Again we see how fallen man cares more for the "sign" than for the spiritual truth within. Later on in Act Two, scene one, Cloten uses his noble birth and outward rank as an excuse

for his inner cowardice, "Whoreson dog! I give him satisfaction? Would he had been one of my rank!" (II,i,1.14).

And again:

I am not vexed more at any thing in the earth:
a pox on't, I had rather not be so noble as I am; they
dare not fight me, because of the queen my mother: every
Jack-slave hath his bellyful of fighting, and I must
go up and down like a cock that nobody can match.
(II,i,11.19-24)

We see very clearly the difference between Cloten and Posthumus. Cloten's scenes "emphasize the disparity, so unlike the consistency already observed in Posthumus, between outward pretension and the poverty of the 'stuff within'".¹⁹

The next scene between Pisanio, the "faithful servant" (I,ii,1.174) figure, and Imogen heightens further the distinction between the two men because Imogen surrounds Posthumus with religious imagery. If she should lose one of his letters, Imogen says, "'twere a paper lost,/As offered mercy is" (I,iii,1.3). This metaphor is ironic for it looks forward to a time when Posthumus, fallen to the temptation of pride like Adam, will send her a letter of deceit, of offered damnation. But for the moment their love remains a blessed union. They are separated physically but their love has not been harmed by Cymbeline's tyranny, which significantly is described in nature imagery. Imogen says of Posthumus, that before she could

have charged him
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,

To encounter me with orisons, for then
 I am in heaven for him; or ere I could
 Give him that parting kiss which I had set
 Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father,
 And like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
 Shakes all our buds from growing.

(I,iii,11.30-37)

Imogen is often described as a goddess. She represents the higher holy aspects of Posthumus' love and it is fitting that he should pray to her at the canonical hours, when she is "in heaven for him". Cymbeline is pictured in this speech as a wintry destroyer of all creativity, all natural growth, all love; a metaphor that recalls Polixenes in the sheep-shearing festival in The Winter's Tale.

Belarius describes Cymbeline to Guiderius and Arviragus in similar terms—nature imagery that identifies the king with the original fall:

Cymbeline loved me,
 And when a soldier was the theme, my name
 Was not far off: then was I as a tree
 Whose boughs did bend with fruit: but in one night,
 A storm or robbery, call it what you will,
 Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
 And left me bare to weather.

(III,iii,11.58-64)

When Cymbeline branded Belarius a traitor, and accepted material evidence that was false, he plucked off the fruit and left his loyal servant on "this rock" (III,iii,1.70), in a demonic wasteland cut off from the Garden. The power of the fallen king to destroy his loyal subject is like the power of the fallen bridegroom to destroy his loyal bride

and in Act Five, the act of redemption and restoration, we will see the same imagery applied to Posthumus and Imogen, but this time the fruit will be restored to the tree and the rock destroyed.

Cymbeline has not only destroyed a marriage, his concupiscence has also affected Britain, and his temptress has been the queen. The queen, as Imogen has observed, is a fine dissembler. In Act One, scene five, she begins and ends the scene with some charming talk of flowers. But the violets, cowslips and primroses enclose a scene concerned with poison. Nature before the fall was innocent; it fell with man. But fallen nature is not evil in itself. It is only through the use that man makes of it that it can become evil. Here the queen distorts nature to the point where flowers and poison are forced together. The queen herself appears as a beautiful flower, but she is as deadly as the poison she would give Imogen. And, like the emblematic figure of sin, as she disguises herself with outward beauty, so she tells Pisanio that the poison is a cordial which "hath the king/Five times redeem'd from death" (I,v,1.63) and which will likewise restore the pale Imogen who is languishing away in her prison. But here in this scene we get our first glimpse of a divine providence, working in this case through a human agent, the doctor. Cornelius is not blind like Cymbeline. He recognizes the queen's true character, "I do know her spirit,/And will not trust one of



her malice with/A drug of such damn'd nature" (I,v,11.33=35). So he plays her game of deception, and the apparent cordial that is supposed to be poison, becomes in truth a cordial whose effect is only a "show of death" (I,v,1.40). He says of the cordial:

...there is
No danger in what show of death it makes,
More than the locking-up the spirits a time,
To be more fresh, reviving. She is fool'd
With a most false effect; and I the truer,
So to be false with her.

(I,v,11.40-45)

All the good characters in the play, the regenerative forces, work at dispelling illusion and making appearance and reality one; all the bad characters, the destructive forces, deceive themselves with illusions and work to deceive others.

The queen hopes to poison Imogen, but she has already succeeded in poisoning Cymbeline and through him Britain. She is an unrealistic character, representing absolute evil, the tempting serpent in the Garden, whose very repentance represents a demonic inversion of the Christian act. In the last scene of the play, Cornelius tells Cymbeline that dying, she "repented/The evils she hatch'd were not effected" (V,v,1.59). She stands as a demonic symbol of how far Cymbeline and through him Britain has fallen.

In Act Three, scene two, the queen and Cloten are adamant in their determination to wage war against Rome rather than submit and pay the tribute. England has always prided

herself on her freedom, and an event of Shakespeare's time like the destruction of the Spanish armada is echoed in the queen's speech when she describes how Caesar's ships,

On our terrible seas,
Like egg-shells moved upon their surges, crack'd
As easily 'gainst our rocks: for joy whereof
The famed Cassibelan, who was once at point —
O giglot fortune! — to master Caesar's sword,
Made Lud's town with rejoicing bright
And Britons strut with courage.

(III,i,11.27-33)

Her speech echoes the well-known patriotism of the British. But it must be placed in context with the other speeches of Cloten and Cymbeline in the same scene, for we must remember that sin always has a lovely appearance. Cloten says "Britain is/A world by itself; and we will nothing pay/For wearing our own noses" (III,i,11.12-14) and Cymbeline says:

You must know,
Till the injurious Romans did extort
This tribute from us, we were free: Caesar's ambition,
Which swell'd so much that it did almost stretch
The sides o' the world, against all colour here
Did put the yoke upon's; which to shake off
Becomes a war-like people, whom we reckon
Ourselves to be.

(III,i,11.47-54)

But Cymbeline is a play which upholds fealty to a father, whether spiritual or national, against self-elevation of an individual or a nation. No nation can claim to be "a world in itself" — this is as strong a form of hubris as that which we find in the individual who claims he is a god. And Cymbeline, bearing in mind the Nativity, is a play concerned

with peace and grace—love not war. Cymbeline has reason to give Rome love. He tells the Roman ambassador:

Thou art welcome, Caius.
Thy Caesar knighted me; my youth I spent
Much under him; of him I gather'd honour;
Which he to seek of me again, perforce,
Behooves me keep at utterance.
(III,i,11.69-73)

Caesar has been a father to Cymbeline and similarly Rome has given Britain a heritage. If we are to translate this speech, like the queen's, into Renaissance thought, it likely indicates Shakespeare's awareness, common to the time, of the tremendous cultural debt of Britain to the classics. Many poets like Spenser reflect the Renaissance belief that, according to legend, London was a new Troy, but Troy according to Virgil was first rebuilt on the banks of the Tiber. And it was at this time that England's poets and artists turned to ancient Rome to pay tribute.

Cymbeline is, as already suggested, a predominantly religious play—a Christian play translated into a pagan setting. The birth of Christ in Cymbeline's reign, signifying a universal peace, may have also suggested to Shakespeare that it was time to acknowledge the debt of the Church of England to the Roman Catholic church. In Christian doctrine, only when man acknowledges his Creator does he become free and immortal. Similarly we shall see in the sooth-sayer's prophecy that Britain becomes strong and regenerative not when she turns away from her father but when she pays him

tribute. It is only then that she gains her ancient heritage. And in religious, historical terms, the Church of England's acknowledgement of her roots in the Roman Catholic Church sets her free to proclaim herself the regenerated Church of Christianity.

But to return to the journey of the individual man. When Posthumus is separated from Imogen in Italy, he succumbs to the wiles of the crafty Iachimo. Iachimo believes that all love is physical and as a material thing, corruptible. He says to Posthumus in their first encounter, "If you buy ladies' flesh at a million a dram, you cannot preserve it from tainting" (I,iv,1.46). He recognizes only the flesh and sees it in the commercial terms of the price at which it is to be bought and sold. He represents an extreme division of the harmony of the material and the spiritual as seen in the Posthumus-Imogen marriage. Like Iago in Othello, he reduces the spiritual to the physical and material by rationalizing it away. In the beginning of the scene, however, Posthumus firmly acknowledges the importance of the spiritual aspect of love — of the faith and trust that are beyond price. When Iachimo first attempts to equate the object, the diamond, with the intangible love of Imogen, Posthumus corrects him.

Iach. Either your unparagoned mistress is dead, or she's outprized by a trifle.

Post. You are mistaken: the one may be sold, or given, or if there were wealth enough for the purchase, or merit for the gift: the other is not a thing for sale, and only the

gift of the gods.
 Iach. Which the gods have given you?
 Post. Which by their graces I will keep.
 (I, iv, 11.87-95)

In this short exchange we see that Posthumus realizes that Imogen's love and fidelity are not things to be bought or sold but reflections of God's grace towards man. A higher value than temporal, material worth is placed on Imogen's love. Iachimo's sarcastic question shows clearly that he finds this unbelievable.

But banished from Imogen's presence, Posthumus finds it hard to retain his belief in her higher qualities without the physical affirmation. As R.G. Hunter explains it:

Prevented by separation from the physical enjoyment of love, Posthumus very naturally indeed, becomes a bit obsessed with love's physical aspect and begins to consider Imogen's spiritual nature solely in terms of her ability to remain physically chaste. Instead of properly assuming that Imogen's spiritual value ensures her physical chastity, he begins to think of her physical chastity as the guarantee of her spiritual value.²⁰

Posthumus' pride in his possession of an "unparagoned mistress" leads him, under Iachimo's subtle wiles, to turn away from the heavens. He no longer believes that Imogen's love is a gift of the gods; he sees it now as a temporal, material object that must be proven true in empirical terms and not accepted on faith. But as soon as he attempts to try her, he fails his own test and falls to Iachimo's temptation. Pride in his mistress, which is really self-

pride, leads him to accept Iachimo's challenge and to "lend" the diamond, which he had promised to keep forever, for the wager. Imogen has the bracelet stolen from her arm; Posthumus gives his ring up willingly. We are reminded of Imogen's admonition when she placed the ring on his finger, "Remain, remain thou here/While sense can keep it on" (I,i,11.117-118).

But Posthumus has lost his God-given "sense". Iachimo recognizes clearly that Posthumus has now turned away in his hubris from faith in the grace of the gods. After Posthumus has agreed to the wager, he says:

By the gods, it is one. If I bring you no sufficient testimony that I have enjoyed the dearest bodily part of your mistress, my ten thousand ducats are yours; so is your diamond too: if I come off, and leave her in such honour as you have trust in, she your jewel, this your jewel, and my gold are yours: provided I have your commendation for my more free entertainment.
(I,iv,11.160-167)

Ironically Iachimo believes that Posthumus trusts Imogen because he has valued this trust at a high price, but Posthumus shows that he has lost his trust in Imogen by sending Iachimo to test her fidelity. He has now placed a material worth on his heavenly gift. Iachimo spells it out in his equation of Imogen with the diamond, "she your jewel, this your jewel". In his egoistic pride, Posthumus worships neither divine grace nor its reflection in Imogen's love.

Posthumus' vision is now as distorted as Cymbeline's; he equates the appearance--the physical chastity with the inner spiritual value. And now he clings like Cymbeline to the law for proof and justification, using in some cases biblical words that are ironic here, considering their spiritual associations. He says to Iachimo, "let there be covenants drawn between's" (I,iv,1.153), and later "let us have articles betwixt us" (I,iv,1.168), and Iachimo speaks of "testimony" (I,iv,1.161), "covenant" (I,iv,1.177) and "lawful counsel" (I,iv,1.178).

The sinful man leans on the law. Unable to justify his actions by belief in a divine authority outside his own ego, he puts all his faith in the power of his own temporal creations. Justice becomes perverted until it is no longer a road to truth but a disguise for evil.

Posthumus has yielded to Iachimo's temptations through his own pride. Turned away from God, he is unable to distinguish between appearance and reality, proof offered to the senses and spiritual faith. He leans on the law for guidance—"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—and it only leads him further into evil and destruction.

Posthumus has fallen; Imogen remains faithful. When Iachimo meets Imogen, he fears that indeed her outer beauty does reflect her inner purity:

All of her that is out of door most rich!
If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare,

She is alone the Arabian bird, and I
Have lost the wager.
(I,vi,11.15-18)

But he proceeds to use the same tricks on her that will later succeed with Posthumus. He tries to suggest that Posthumus has lost his ability (as indeed he has though not in the way Iachimo suggests) to "Partition make with spectacles so precious/'Twixt fair and foul" (I,vi,11.37-38). Like Iago³, Iachimo's language is full of bestial imagery, for when the spirit is lost, the appetite gains complete control over the will. He speaks of "apes and monkeys" (I,vi,1.39) and refers to Posthumus'

...cloyed will
That satiate yet unsatisfied desire, that tub
Both fill'd running, ravening first the lamb
Longs after garbage.
(I,vi,11.46-49)

Posthumus is the "Briton reveller" (I,vi,1.61) who has proved faithless to Imogen, who is described here as "the lamb", the animal type of Christ. Love, reduced to a physical, material level is turned into bondage. The lying Iachimo describes how Posthumus mocks a Frenchman who is loyal to his girl at home:

...the jolly Briton—
Your lord, I mean—laughs from's free lungs, cries 'O,
Can my sides hold, to think that man, who knows
By history, report, or his own proof,
What woman is, yea, what she cannot choose
But must be, will his free hours languish for
Assured bondage?'
(I,vi,11.67-73)

Now Iachimo urges Imogen to gain revenge by paying him back in kind:

Should he make me
Live, like Diana's priest, betwixt cold sheets,
Whiles he is vaulting variable ramps,
In your despite, upon your purse? Revenge it.
I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure,
More noble than that runagate to your bed,
And will continue fast to your affection,
Still close as sure.

(I,vi,ll.133-140)

But Imogen refuses to believe him. She holds steadfastly to her trust in Posthumus and recognizes the demon before her:

Thou wrong'st a gentleman, who is as far
From thy report as thou from honour, and
Solicit'st here a lady that disdains
Thee and the devil alike.

(I,vi,ll.145-148)

The devil is of course very cunning and Iachimo, finding his plot foiled, regains Imogen's confidence by pretending that he was just testing her virtue. Evil puts on a virtuous face and Imogen is ready to believe him because Posthumus, whom she trusts, has provided the mask. In his letter he writes that Iachimo "is one of the noblest note, to whose kindness I am most infinitely tied. Reflect upon him accordingly, as you value your trust" (I,vi,ll.22-24).

Posthumus is so convinced of his righteousness that he uses deceit to trap Imogen. It is he who has supplied the tempter with a noble front. Iachimo's descriptions of him in this

scene, the "descended god" who "hath a kind of honour sets him off,/More than mortal seeming" (I,vi,11.169-171), the "sir so rare"(I,vi,1.74) who "cannot err" (I,vi,1.175), the valiantbird who is the "best feather of our wing" (I,vi,1.186) are sharp reminders of the height from which Posthumus has fallen. In the midst of all these evil intentions, Imogen remains alone inviolate, "the Arabian bird" (I,vi,1.17), the phoenix in all its rarity, who alone of all birds is immortal in its perfection. This metaphor of course looks forward to the Imogen who will rise anew out of the chaos of destruction in Act Four.

But at the moment the rare bird is in captivity at the fallen court, open and powerless to the evil intentions of Iachimo. In Act Two, scene one, as though aware of the evil near Imogen, the second lord prays for the "divine Imogen" (II,i,1.62):

The heavens hold firm
The walls of thy dear honour, keep unshaked
That temple, thy fair mind, that thou mayst stand,
To enjoy thy banish'd lord and this great land.
(II,i,11.67-70)

Imogen, in scene two, also seems to have a sixth sense of demons lurking near her and before she sleeps she **prays**,
"To your protection I commend me, gods/From fairies and the tempters of the night/Guard me, beseech ye" (II,ii,11.8-10).

Iachimo's speech over the senseless Imogen is so full of important imagery that it is really necessary to quote it

in full:

The crickets sing, and man's o'er-labour'd sense
Repairs itself by rest. Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd
The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,
How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily,
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!
But kiss; one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,
How deadly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o' the taper
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,
To see the enclosed lights, now canopied,
Under these windows, white and azure laced
With blue of heaven's own tinct. But my design,
To note the chamber: I will write all down:
Such and such pictures; there the window; such
The adornment of her bed; the arras; figures,
Why, such and such; and the contents o' the story.
Ah, but some natural notes about her body,
Above ten thousand meaner moveables
Would testify, to enrich mine inventory.
O sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her!
And be in her sense but as a monument,
Thus in a chapel lying! Come off, come off:

[Taking off her bracelet]

As slippery as the Gordian knot was hard!
'Tis mine; and this will witness outwardly,
As strongly as the conscience does within,
To the madding of her lord. On her left breast
A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
I' the bottom of a cowslip: here's a voucher,
Stronger than ever law could make: this secret
Will force him think I have pick'd the lock and ta'en
The treasure of her honour. Nor more. To what end?
Why should I write this down, that's riveted,
Screw'd to my memory? She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus; here the leaf's turn'd down
Where Philomel gave up. I have enough:
To the trunk again, and shut the spring of it.
Swift, swift, you dragons of the night, that dawning
May have the raven's eye! I lodge in fear;
Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.

(II,ii,11.11-50)

Imogen is, even by Iachimo, described in holy images.
She is a "monument" in a "chapel" lying. She is asleep,
but sleep as Iachimo says, is the "ape of death", and

imprisoned in this tomb-like world Imogen appears dead--as if she has already drunk the poison-cordial. Again she is the epitome of pure chastity, "a fresh lily" but "whiter than the sheets", as if, according to Cymbeline's desire, she has languished a drop of blood a day. Even in Iachimo's very sensual description, there is a unity of physical and spiritual imagery. Her lips are "rubies unparagoned", her "breathing/Perfumes the chamber"; air and fire are her elements, ("The flame o' the taper/Bows towards her") as if, like Cleopatra, she had given her baser ones away. Her "enclosed lights", the physical manifestation of her spiritual radiance, are "canopied". Her eyes, if they were open, would be a heavenly blue, but "laced" like some delicate embroidery with "white and azure". In each description, the material and the spiritual are brought together.

Through the sensuality of the description, there is a sense in which Iachimo seems to be raping Imogen as he looks at her. And symbolically, he does indeed rob her of her chastity when he steals the bracelet from her arm. All the classical references in the speech strengthen this impression. Tarquin was, of course, the ravisher of Lucrece, and Iachimo imagines how he stood over her sleeping form as he himself stands over Imogen, chaste "Cytherea". Alexander severed the Gordian knot to become king; Iachimo takes off the bracelet easily and his victory will be as slippery. Philomel is another aerial, spirit figure who, robbed by Tereus of her

chastity, begged the gods to be changed into a nightingale (again the association of Imogen with winged creatures whose element is the air of the heavens) so that she could sing her plaintive story.

But Iachimo is not beguiled by all this beauty; it does not dissuade him from his evil plan and he is soon making an inventory, from the ornaments in the room to the mole on Imogen's breast which he turns into a piece of material evidence, "a voucher/Stronger than law could make".

The rhythm in the speech is interesting. We get the impression that at any moment Iachimo will succumb to the holiness that pervades Imogen's physical beauty. But as the moment draws near when we think he will finally be converted, Iachimo quickly pulls himself back. He begins to rationalize the beauty until it becomes a material object whose points are to be noted for further study like a "monument". Yet, by the time he has taken all he needs as proof for Posthumus, even Iachimo is afraid. The "heavenly angel" is indeed locked in "hell", the hell that the fallen world, through the evil of men like Iachimo, has created.

In scene four, Iachimo plunges Posthumus into hell and we may well "quake in the present winter's state and wish/That warmer days would come" (II,iv,11.5-6). Posthumus is in southern Italy but the association with winter imagery links him directly to the tyrannical, fallen Cymbeline. His words are already coloured with the sensual imagery that is

associated with Iachimo's language. He says to Iachimo,
 "If you can make't apparent/That you have tasted her in bed,
 my hand/And ring is yours" (II,iv,11.56-58). Like Othello,
 he has demanded material proof of his wife's infidelity,
 and like Iago, Iachimo easily gives it to him. First through
 a thorough description of Imogen's bedchamber:

it was hang'd
 With tapestry of silk and silver; the story
 Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,
 And Cyndus swell'd above the banks, or for
 The press of boats or pride: a piece of work
 So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
 In workmanship and value; which I wonder'd
 Could be so rarely and exactly wrought,
 Since the true life on't was...
 (II,iv,11.68-76)

Here once again classical imagery is used to substantiate
 the theme. Cleopatra, as harlot, is of course meant by
 Iachimo as a reflection on Imogen and this is how Posthumus
 will see her. In addition the speech shows, as Derek Traversi
 suggests,²¹ the metallic civilization of the court society
 where the "true life" is "wrought" and subject to a certain
 material value. But natural growth and energy, breath--life
 itself, is lacking. The picture is of stone and glass, a
 dead world. Yet, the artist working with lifeless objects,
 is seen as the surpasser of nature:

The chimney
 Is south the chamber, and the chimney-piece
 Chaste Dian bathing: never saw I figures
 So likely to report themselves: the cutter
 Was as another nature, dumb; outwent her,
 Motion and breath left out.
 (II,iv,11.80-85)

There is a sense in which all the dead, heavily fretted decoration of the room, serves to stifle and smother the living Imogen.

Iachimo offers three vouchers: the description of the chamber, the bracelet, and finally the mole on Imogen's breast. But Posthumus doesn't even wait for the last one which is at least physically part of Imogen. Like Othello and the handkerchief, he accepts the bracelet, the thing, the inanimate object as proof of the infidelity of the living, spiritual being that is Imogen. He immediately gives up his ring to Iachimo--one jewel for another--and denounces not only Imogen but all women with her:

Let there be no honour,
Where there is beauty; truth, where semblance; love,
Where there's another man: the vows of women
No more bondage be, to where they are made,
Than they are to their virtues; which is nothing.
O, above measure false!

(II,iv,11.108-113)

Apparently logical, material evidence has the effect of making Posthumus behave completely irrationally. It feeds upon and lets loose his emotions.

Philario cautions him--presenting a reasonable explanation for the loss of the bracelet. We are reminded of how Emilia stole Desdemona's handkerchief in Othello.

Have patience, sir,
And take your ring again; 'tis not yet won:
It may be probable she lost it; or
Who knows if one of her women, being corrupted,
Hath stol'n it from her?

(II,iv,11.114-118)

And now Posthumus does ask for some sign related to the living, breathing Imogen. But when Iachimo swears he has told the truth, Posthumus readily believes him. Like Cymbeline in his treatment of Belarius, Posthumus, in his diseased mind, is quick to believe the man who bears false witness but offers material proof, against the loyalty of Imogen, which must be accepted on faith. Posthumus has cut himself off from faith in the gods. Now he trusts only his sense perceptions as transformed into the image of the desires of his infected will. His will, lacking reference to the spiritual world, a world of faith and trust that cannot be tested empirically, is now controlled by his appetites. In other words, the will cut off from its proper place under the imaginative spirit that reflects the angelic, Godly part of man, is now under the control of his bestial appetite which works through his reliance on his mortal reason and his temporal laws. Everything of the spirit is reduced to physical form and thence to the inanimate, the material. Without God, man is spiritually dead, and everything in the world becomes dead to him. Thus with Posthumus, Imogen's love, an intangible, spiritual quality, that cannot be tested or valued in worldly terms, becomes first merely physical, sexual fidelity, and then is finally seen as a material object, the bracelet. Posthumus has reduced Imogen to a frozen figure on one of the friezes in her bedroom without "motion or breath". "The diamond, which was a precious jewel, only

through the spiritual radiance of their love, is now a dead stone.

But Imogen still knows the difference. In the previous scene, when she has discovered the loss of the bracelet, she says:

I do think
I saw't this morning: confident I am
Last night 'twas on mine arm; I kiss'd it:
I hope it be not gone to tell my lord
That I kiss aught but he.
(II,iii,11149 - 153)

She is joking, for she knows that even with the physical, material proof of their love gone, the love remains. She may not kiss the bracelet but she can still kiss her Posthumus in her imagination, even though the physical person of Posthumus and the physical sign of their love have gone. The spirit of their love remains without need of material evidence.

But for Posthumus, the material evidence has become the spirit, and their love is destroyed. All the logic, the rationality of his demands for proof, are the superficial forms of an irrational emotion. Like Othello, who thinks and plans but on the basis of his pent-up emotions, Posthumus' emotions finally take full control of him. "O that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal!" (II,iv,1.146), he says. The human will, cut off from the spirit when it is turned away from a divine authority outside itself, must depend entirely on its human reason, but that reason is fed by the appetite.

In such a way, the rational, the logical, has its basis in the irrational, and the one serves only to disguise the other. Posthumus believes that by punishing Imogen he is only acting justly, but as he says himself in his soliloquy in scene five, this justice, fed by his emotions, is vengeance. And this vengeance is based on his own sexual concupiscence. He can now see only the physical, sexual side of the woman he owns—the Imogen who was his holy goddess has left his mind completely. He says to himself:

O, vengeance, vengeance!
 Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd
 And pray'd me oft forbearance; did it with
 A pudency so rosy the sweet view on't
 Might well have warm'd old Saturn; that I thought her
 As chaste as unsunn'd snow. O, all the devils!
 This yellow Iachimo, in an hour,—was't not?—
 Or less,—at first?—perchance he spoke not, but
 Like a full-acorn'd boar, a German one,
 Cried 'O!' and mounted; found no opposition
 But what he look'd for should oppose and she
 Should from encounter guard.

(II,v,11.8-19)

Now, like both Iachimo and Iago, love is reduced in his eyes to his own sexual pleasure and note that it is "lawful pleasure"—the rational law is the counterpart to sexual lust. The imagery echoes Iago's "making the beast with two backs" (Othello, Act I, scene i, l.117), and like Iago, he now sees human beings as animals.

And like Hamlet, he sees the whole world reflected in the faithless figure of Imogen. Like Cymbeline, he too has been led astray by an evil woman, but a woman whose evil his own mind has created. Now he curses all of them:

Could I find out
 The woman's part in me! For there's no motion
 That tends to vice in man, but I affirm
 It is the woman's part: be it lying, note it,
 The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
 Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
 Ambitions, covetings, changes of prides, disdain,
 Nice longing, slanders, mutability,
 All faults that may be named, nay, that hell know,
 Why, hers, in part or all; but rather, all;
 For even to vice
 They are not constant, but are changing still
 One vice, but of a minute old, for one
 Not half so old as that. I'll write against them,
 Detest them, curse them: yet 'tis greater skill
 In a true hate, to pray they have their will:
 The very devils cannot plague them better. (II,v,11.19-35)

The last line and indeed the whole speech is ironic. Posthumus is actually cursing himself--dooming himself to perdition through his fallen will that will drive him on to greater sin. The speech is a catalogue of his own sins, the sins of fallen man, but like Adam in the sight of God he blames it all on Eve.

Yet Imogen, as we have seen, remains unfallen, a symbol of the best in mankind, where he is closest to the divine. In Act Two, scene three, she is again associated with music, heavenly harmony. The cloutish Cloten speaks more truly than he understands when he says, "I am advised to give her music o' mornings; they say it will penetrate" (II,iii,1.12). The song is lovely but, unlike the royal boys, Cloten cannot make his own music; he is forced to use others and the purpose of the song is wasted on Imogen. Cloten maligns Posthumus, like Cymbeline taking outer appearance to stand for inner

qualities. Echoing Cymbeline, he says to Imogen:

You sin against
Obedience, which you owe your father. For
The contract you pretend with that base wretch,
One bred of alms and foster'd with cold dishes,
With scraps o' the court, it is no contract, none:
And though it be allow'd in meaner parties—
Yet who than he more mean?—to knit their souls,
On whom there is no more dependency
But brats and beggary, in self-figured knot;
Yet you are curb'd from that enlargement by
The consequence o' the crown, and must not soil
The precious note of it with a baser slave,
A hilding for a livery, a squire's cloth,
A pantler, not so eminent.

(II,iii,11.116-129)

Imogen, roused quite humanly to anger, replies that knowing Posthumus' inner virtue, his very clothes are better than the person of the evil Cloten:

His meanest garment,
That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer
In my respect than all the hairs above thee,
Were they all made such men.

(II,iii,11.138-141)

For Imogen retains her clear vision, and seeing into the hearts of the two men as she knows them, she can judge their true worth. But unknown to Imogen, Posthumus has fallen to Cloten's level. In his soliloquy Posthumus' cries for revenge, and his concentration on physical appearance and sex are similar to those of Cloten in Act Three, scene five, after he has learned of Imogen's flight to Milford-Haven.

She said upon a time—
the bitterness of it I now belch from my heart—
that she held the very garment of Posthumus
in more respect than my noble and natural person,
together with the adornment of my qualities. With

that suit upon my back, will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valour, which will then be a torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust hath dined,--which, as I say, to vex her I will execute in the clothes that she so praised,--to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again. She hath despised me rejoicingly, and I'll be merry in my revenge.

(III,v,11.135-150)

He hopes to gain revenge on Imogen as does Posthumus. Both men feel that Imogen has rejected them sexually, and Cloten's lust and determination to ravish Imogen, to take her chastity, is paralleled by Posthumus' order to Pisanio to ravish Imogen by taking her life.

Again evil works through deceit, and Posthumus traps Imogen by telling her that, full of love for her, he waits in Milford-Haven in Wales. To Pisanio he sends another letter telling of Imogen's betrayal and commanding her death. Like Camillo, in The Winter's Tale, Pisanio's vision is clear and he recognizes that Imogen is innocent and his master's mind diseased:

How! of adultery? Wherefore write you not
What monster's her accuser? Leonatus!
O master? What a strange infection
Is fall'n into thy ear! What false Italian,
As poison-tongued as handed, hath prevail'd
On thy too ready hearing? Disloyal! No:
She's punish'd for her truth, and undergoes
More goddess-like than wife-like, such assaults
As would take in some virtue? O, my master!
Thy mind to her is now as low as were
Thy fortunes.

(III,ii,11.1-11)

In scene four, when Pisanio shows Imogen the other letter

ordering her death, we see very clearly the relation in the diseased mind of Posthumus between material evidence and vengeance. Posthumus writes, "I speak not out of weak surmises, but from proof as strong as my grief and as certain as I expect my revenge" (III,iv,1.23-25). When she realizes her master's true purpose, Imogen describes herself as "a garment out of fashion" (III,iv,1.53) that must be ripped to pieces. Posthumus, she believes, has rejected her because she is now poor—her outer garment is now worthless. He has rejected her because her garment is spoiled, but the garment is her sexual chastity. Imogen echoes Posthumus' belief in the frailty of women when she declares:

All good seeming,
By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought
Put on for villany; not born where't grows,
But worn a bait for ladies.
(III,iv,11.56-59)

And again:

True honest men being heard, like false Aeneas,
Were in his time thought false, and Sinon's weeping
Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity
From most true wretchedness: so thou, Posthumus,
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men;
Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjured
From thy great fail.
(III,iv,11.60-66)

His failure, like Adam's, will have a universal effect and all men will be affected by his sin. But Imogen remains true; she seeks death gladly:

I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit
The innocent mansion of my love, my heart:
Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief;
Thy master is not there, who was indeed
The riches of it:-
(III,iv,11.69-73)

Imogen has also described Posthumus in terms of a material value. But the image is used in a very different way. For her the only "riches", the material worth of the world, lay in his love. She translates all matter into a higher spiritual form; Posthumus reduces it until only the material form remains.

Again we see how Christian imagery is associated in this scene with Imogen and her marriage to Posthumus. He has fallen and now "the scriptures of the loyal Leonatus" are "all turned to heresy" (III,iv,1.83). Pisanio calls her "O gracious lady" (III,iv,1.102), and she describes her disobedience to Cymbeline as a "strain of rareness" (III,iv,1.95). Like Christ she is the "elected deer" (III,iv,1.112), and the "lamb" who "entreats the butcher" (III,iv,1.99).

Pisanio cannot kill her for he knows that she is innocent. He advises her to "...wear a mind/Dark as your fortune is, and but disguise/That which, to appear itself, must not yet be" (III,iv,11.146-148). She must "forget to be a woman" (III,iv,1.158) and expose herself to "the greedy touch/Of common-kissing Titan" (III,iv,1.165). Pisanio will "...give but notice you are dead and send him [Posthumus]/Some bloody sign of it;" (III,iv,11.126-127). Thus virtue must adopt disguises and create illusions in order to combat evil and to finally dispel all false appearance. Pisanio will send Posthumus a bloody cloth, a garment that will be apparent evidence of Imogen's death. Imogen must disguise herself

as a boy--Posthumus has robbed her of her womanhood--and turn to the wilderness of nature, for human civilization has proved itself her enemy. Pisanio tells her to await the arrival of Caius Lucius, the Roman leader, who, according to Pisanio, "if that his head have ear in music, [again music and Imogen are related] --doubtless/With joy he will embrace you, for he's honourable/And doubling that most holy" (III,iv,l.178).

Imogen is to turn for help to forces that oppose Cymbeline (forces led by a man whom a Briton calls "holy"), and to the wild nature of Wales, where tormenting as her trial will be, she will find a cordial for her pallor in the heat of the sun, and reward for her ordeal in the love of Guiderius and Arviragus.

III

SOME FALLS ARE MEANS THE HAPPIER TO ARISE

Through a division in time, both Pericles and The Winter's Tale fall easily into two parts. In The Winter's Tale a passage of sixteen years separates the fall of Leontes and his repentance, and the rebirth of youthful innocence and the return of grace in the figures of Perdita and Hermione. The rebirth and redemption are thematically the result of the pattern of destruction and penance. The structure of Cymbeline turns on the same wheel, but the division or movement from destruction to regeneration is a movement in space, not in time. Hope begins anew when the setting of the play shifts from civilization to the natural wilderness of Wales. As Stein tells Marlow in Conrad's novel, Lord Jim, only by immersion in the destructive element, can one find the forces of regeneration and restoration. In Cymbeline, it is in Wales, amongst the rugged crags and dark caves, that these forces are found. And in Act Four, which marks the turning point of the play, destruction and regeneration take place at the same time. In Wales, the lost heirs are found, and Cloten is killed, but at the same time Imogen appears to die, and when she is "reborn", it is to make the horrible discovery that Posthumus lies dead before her.

When the scene moves to the natural setting in Wales, we find once more characters who look to heaven for guidance. Belarius, in the disguise of Morgan, begins the scene with morning prayers:

A goodly day not to keep house, with such
Whose roof's as low as ours! Stoop, boys; this gate
Instructs you how to adore the heavens and bows you
To a morning's holy office: the gates of monarchs
Are arch'd so high that giants may jet through
And keep their impious turbans on, without
Good morrow to the sun. Hail, thou fair heaven!
We house i' the rock, yet use thee not so hardly
As prouder livers do.

(III,iii,11.1-9)

The rugged world of Wales, which is believed to be a savage stronghold for outlaws and wild beasts, has sheltered and brought to flower the virtues of inherent royalty and nobility in Polydore and Cadwal. The stark wasteland will also be both tormenting and restorative to Imogen, who has had to flee the higher civilization of the court. But the court did nurture and breed an Imogen and a Posthumus though now it is a dead, sterile world lacking "the sparks of nature". But in this first scene, Shakespeare shows us, through the comments of Guiderius and Arviragus, that a retreat to nature is not a final solution. Neither state is complete in itself; only when they are brought together into a union of natural energy and human achievement can there be a perfect harmony. The dialectic between Belarius and the boys makes this quite clear. Belarius overpraises the natural life because he finds it contains no human treachery. He tells

the boys:

Now for our mountain sport: up to yond hill;
 Your legs are young; I'll tread these flats. Consider,
 When you above perceive me like a crow,
 That it is place which lessens and sets off:
 And you may then revolve what tales I have told you
 Of courts, of princes, of the tricks in war:
 This service is not service, so being done,
 But being so allow'd: to apprehend thus,
 Draws us a profit from all things we see;
 And often to our comfort, shall we find
 The sharded beetle in a safer hold
 Than is the full wing'd eagle. O, this life
 Is nobler than attending for a check,
 Richer than doing nothing for a bauble,
 Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk:
 Such gain the cap of him that makes 'em fine,
 Yet keeps his book uncross'd: No life to ours.
 (III,iii,11.10-25)

But the boys are, like Imogen, royal birds, and they long to prove themselves in human society, for without coming into contact with other men, they are incomplete and ignorant. Nature has nurtured them, but there is a difference, as already indicated, between lower cosmic nature and higher, individual human nature. The boys are now bound to the lower order of nature which prevents them from fulfilling their own potentialities of human achievement. Guiderius replies to Belarius:

Out of your proof you speak: we, poor, unfledged,
 Have never winged from view o' the nest, nor know not
 What air's from home. Haply this life is best,
 If quiet life be best; sweeter to you
 That have a sharper known; well corresponding
 With your stiff age: but unto us it is
 A cell of ignorance; travelling a-bed;
 A prison for a debtor, that not dares
 To stride a limit.
 (III,iii,1.27-34)

For old age, nature can mean peace and freedom from the evils

Belarius has described, but for the young boys it is as great a prison as the court was for Imogen. Neither state can offer complete fulfillment. In Wales the winter is as tyrannous physically as Cymbeline, whose human tyranny over the court was described in metaphors of winter. As Arviragus says:

What should we speak of
When we are old as you? When we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how,
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing;
We are beastly, subtle as the fox for prey,
Like warlike as the wolf for what we eat;
Our valour is to chase what flies; Our cage
We make a quire, as doth the prison'd bird,
And sing our bondage freely.

(III,iii,11.35-44)

Like Imogen, they are imprisoned birds. She lacks the life-giving energy of nature; they lack the society of men where they can become learned in the arts and become more than beasts. But still, we learn from Belarius, that rough and untrained as they are, their natural nobility shines through their exterior. Guiderius is strong and courageous. Belarius tells how

When on my three-foot stool I sit and tell
The warlike feats I have done, his spirits fly out
Into my story: Say 'Thus mine enemy fell,
And thus I set my foot on's neck;' even then
The princely blood flows in his cheek, he sweats,
Strains his young nerves and puts himself in posture
That acts my words.

(III,iii,11.89-95)

Arviragus is musical and artistic, a poet who, as Belarius

tells us "strikes life into my speech and shows much more/
His own conceiving" (III,iii,11.97-98). They are identified
with the two kinds of nobility human nature can take, the
bravery of the warrior and the creative imagination of the
artist.

When Cymbeline, in Act Three, scene five, discovers
that Imogen has fled, we see, through the imagery, the
difference between Imogen and the royal boys and Cloten.
Like the boys, Imogen is again described as a bird, who, as
the queen says, "wing'd with fervour of her love," has
"flown/To her desired Posthumus" (III,iv,11.61-62). When
Cloten resolves to revenge himself on Imogen, he says, "My
revenge is now at Milford; would I had wings to follow it"
(1.161). Imogen and her brothers soar higher than the earth;
their place is in the heavens; their element is air. Cloten
has no wings, and beast-like he must crawl along the earth.

In scene six Imogen, guided by divine providence,
comes to the cave of Belarius. For two nights she has
struggled through the wilderness, sacrificing herself for
Posthumus and yet she is Fidele. She can say regretfully
but still with love, "My dear lord!/Thou art one o' the
false ones" (III,vi,11.14-15). When she is discovered she
is immediately associated with divinity. Belarius calls
her "a fairy" (III,vi,1.42) and later, "By Jupiter, an
angel! or if not/An earthly paragon! Behold divineness/No
elder than a boy" (III,vi,11.44-46).

It is interesting to note how the royal boys will have nothing to do with material values. When Imogen offers to pay with gold for the food she has eaten, they are angry and Arviragus says, "All gold and silver rather turn to dust/ As 'tis no better reckoned, but of those/That worship dirty gods" (III,vi,11.55-57). They have followed well the teachings of Belarius who has shown them the true worth of the gods of commerce that men worship.

Act Four is both the low point and the turning point of the play. It is here that Imogen apparently dies but comes to life again, and Posthumus, repenting of his evils, kills them as Guiderius kills his counterpart, the evil Cloten. Again we are given a hint of the symbolic relation between Cloten and Posthumus in the first scene where Cloten meditates "How fit his garments serve me" (IV,i,1.2), and

...I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as his, no less young, more strong, not beneath him in fortunes, beyond him in the advantage of the time, above him in birth, alike conversant in general services, and more remarkable in single oppositions: yet this imperceivable thing loves him in my despite.

(IV,i,11.10-15)

Judging only from externals, as do Cymbeline and also now Posthumus, Cloten is indeed worthier than his rival but Imogen, Guiderius and Arviragus see with different eyes.

The boys and Imogen love each other immediately because, turned to God, they are endowed with clear vision and recognize each other's worth. In the second scene of

the act Belarius again emphasizes how true spiritual nobility and royalty is nurtured by nature. He says of the boys:

O noble strain!
 O worthiness of nature! breed of greatness!
 Cowards father cowards and base things are base;
 Nature hath meal and bran, contempt and grace.
 (IV,ii,ll.24-27)

Nature contains both good and evil, imprinted on her by men. Where she finds nobility, she brings it to fruit. Belarius addresses her as a divinity:

O thou goddess,
 Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon'st
 In these two princely boys! They are as gentle
 As zephyrs blowing below the violet,
 Not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough,
 Their royal blood enchafed, as the rudest wind,
 That by the top doth take the mountain pine,
 And make him stoop to the vale. 'Tis wonder
 That an invisible instinct should frame them
 To royalty unlearn'd, honour untaught,
 Civility not seen from other, valour
 That wildly grows in them, but yields a crop
 As if it had been sow'd.
 (IV,ii,ll.169-181)

Imogen echoes him when she contrasts their goodness with the evil of the court:

These are kind creatures, Gods, what lies I have heard!
 Our courtiers say all's savage but at court:
 Experience, O, thou disproveest report!
 The imperious seas breed monsters, for the dish
 Poor tributary rivers as sweet fish.
 (IV,ii,ll.33-35)

In the savage wilderness, Imogen finds courtesy and love (the Christian symbol of the fish); in the court she found only monsters and serpents, demonic images of the evil in the corrupted seas of empire. As she recognizes the nobility of the boys, so they are quick to recognize hers. Arviragus,

associating her with music, says "How angel-like he sings" (IV,ii,1.48), and Guiderius, associating her with air, says:

Nobly he yokes
A smiling with a sigh, as if the sigh
Was that it was, for not being such a smile;
The smile mocking the sigh, that it would fly
From so divine a temple, to commix
With winds that sailors rail at.
(IV,ii,11.52-57)

But evil too can find its way into nature. Imogen drinks the poison-cordial; Cloten advances against Guiderius. Again Cloten demands the respect due to his outward appearance. He says to Guiderius, "Thou villain base/Knows't me not by my clothes?" (IV,ii,11.80-81). Guiderius replies "No, nor thy tailor, rascal,/Who is thy grandfather: he made those clothes/Which, as it seems, make thee" (IV,ii,11.82-84). Cloten adds, "To thy further fear/Nay to thy mere confusion, though shalt know/I am son to the queen" (IV,ii,11.91-93). But Guiderius, like Imogen, is not deceived by appearances and replies, "I am sorry for't; not seeming/So worthy as thy birth" (IV,ii,11.94-95). When he kills Cloten and Belarius fears retribution, he says:

Why, worthy father, what have we to lose,
But that he swore to take, our lives? The law
Protects not us: then why should we be tender
To let an arrogant piece of flesh threat us,
Play judge and executioner all himself,
For we do fear the law?
(IV,ii,11.124-129)

Again the law is seen as limited and infected by human evil. Like Posthumus, Cymbeline and Leontes in The Winter's Tale

Cloten would "play judge and executioner all himself.". This is not justice, and nature does not recognize it because it is corrupt and fallen. In the Garden man ruled over nature because he had the spiritual authority of God; now fallen, his laws tainted by his sins have no control over nature. Nature recognizes neither man-made laws nor man-decided values. Guiderius throws Cloten's head into the sea to "tell the fishes he's the queen's son" (IV,ii,1.154); they will not recognize his title. As for the boys, they are under a higher providence. As Arviragus says, "Let ordinance/Come as the gods foresay it" (IV,ii,1.145). Man is not the final authority.

Cloten is dead, but so apparently is Imogen. Once again she calls forth music; this time played by Arviragus to herald her death. Now all the images associated with her come together. Arviragus says, "The bird is dead" (IV,ii,1.197); Guiderius calls her the "sweetest, fairest lily!" (IV,ii,1.202). For Belarius, she is a "...blessed thing!/Jove knows what man thou mightst have made; But I,/Thou diedst, a most rare boy, of melancholy" (IV,ii,11.205-207). There is something mystical and special about Imogen. They cannot accept her death; it is as though her rarity would transform it. Guiderius says:

Why, he but sleeps:
If he be gone, he'll make his grave a bed;
With female fairies will his tomb be haunted,
And worms will not come to thee.
(IV,ii,11.216-219)

Because of her "rareness", Imogen will not be prey to the forces of generation. Arviragus speaks of burying her in flowers, cataloging them as Perdita does in The Winter's Tale. Like a bird, he will cover her grave with flowers in the spring, and with warm moss in the winter. The mourning for Imogen ends with the beautiful dirge, in which death is seen as a release from both the hardships of nature and from the evils of humanity. The two works as counterpoint in the song:

Gui. Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Arv. Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Gui. Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Arv. Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Gui. Fear not slander, censure rash;
Arv. Thou has finish'd joy and moan:
Both All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

Gui. No exorciser harm thee!
Arv. Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Gui. Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Arv. Nothing ill come near thee!
Gui. Quiet consummation have;
And renowned be thy grave!
(IV,ii,11.258-281)

They leave Imogen, believing her dead. Seemingly, she has been killed by the queen's evil potion that has accomplished Posthumus' revenge. But thanks to Cornelius, she soon awakens, to horror at the discovery of what she

takes to be the headless body of her dead lord beside her:

A headless man! the garments of Posthumus!
 I know the shape of's leg: this is his hand;
 His foot Mercurial; his Martial thigh;
 The brawns of Hercules: but his Jovial face--
 Murder in heaven?--How!--'Tis gone.

(IV,ii,11.308-402)

Cloten is right. In outward appearance--without the Jovial face--in which Imogen can read the inner intangible qualities that distinguish the noble man and relate him to the divine, Cloten is the equal of Posthumus. As we have seen, both Cloten and Posthumus have sought vengeance on Imogen and, as R.G. Hunter points out, Imogen's mistaking the body of Cloten for Posthumus is natural, for he has sunk to Cloten's level.

Posthumus, then, has adopted the mindless savagery of Cloten, and Cloten, by putting on Posthumus's clothes, underlines the resemblance. When Guiderius lops off Cloten's head, the resemblance becomes perfect. I take Cloten's headless body to be a deeply ironic and excessively macabre joke--a deserved mockery of Posthumus. For he too, has lost his head. By allowing himself to consider the love between him and Imogen to be a matter simply of things, he has reduced himself to the status of a thing--a mindless corpse. Remove the heads from both Cloten and Posthumus and Cloten will equal Posthumus. Cloten is right. As a thing he is the equal of Posthumus, and Posthumus has chosen, for the time, to change himself into a thing.²²

Posthumus wanted to tear Imogen apart; confronted with what she believes to be the dead body of her betrayer, Imogen, who loves him in spite of his faults, is overcome with sorrow. She suspects Pisanio of the horrible deed but has no room in her heart for thoughts of revenge.

With the entrance of the Roman forces, we get our first glimpse of the supernatural, in the soothsayer's dream. Philarmonus says:

Last night, the very gods show'd me a vision—
 I fast and pray'd for their intelligence—thus:
 I saw Jove's bird, the Roman eagle, wing'd
 From the spongy south to this part of the west,
 There vanish'd in the sunbeams: which portends—
 Unless my sins abuse my divination—
 Success to the Roman host.

(IV,ii,ll.346-352)

But to fallen man, the ways of God are, as we shall see later, indeed mysterious and indiscernible to his clouded eyes. The speech, of course, once more turns the audience away from the individual crisis to that of the nation. But still, the image of Jove's bird, the eagle, recalls the bird images applied to Imogen, the royal boys and Posthumus before his fall; they all have something of the heavens within them. Furthermore, when Caius Lucius finds Imogen beside her dead master, and she tells him that her name is Fidele, he says, "Thou dost approve thyself the very same:/Thy name well fits thy faith, thy faith thy name" (IV,ii,ll.380-381). His ready acceptance of Imogen and his clear perception of her

true worth and loyalty unites Britain and Rome not only on a national level but also on a supernatural one of faith and holiness.

Lucius' words at the end of the scene, "Some falls are means the happier to arise" (IV,ii,l.403)—the fortunate fall—serve to indicate the start of an upward movement. They are echoed in the next scene by Pisanio when he says "The heavens still must work" (IV,iii,l.40) and "Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd" (IV,iii,l.46). Man, bound upon the wheel of fortune, is still controlled by the "heavens", a spiritual providence outside temporal generation that will ultimately allow him to transcend his pitiful state.

By the end of the act the element of nature so necessary for rejuvenation is beginning to work, through the royal boys, for the regeneration of Britain. Belarius does not want to go to the aid of his country. Like the old, fallen and sinful, he both fears Cymbeline's righteous anger and continues to condemn him: "And besides, the king/Hath not deserved my service, nor your loves" (IV,iv,ll.25-26). In his intractable pride he is as sinful as the man who sinned against him. There is no forgiveness in Belarius after all these years, and only the nobility of the two boys makes him change his mind. The young do indeed teach the old. Guiderius and Arviragus both realize the impotence of human virtue bound forever to nature. Only in the society

of men can it be creative and redeeming. Belarius calls the boys "...hot summer's tanlings/And the shrinking slaves of winter" (IV,iii,11.28-29). Guiderius replies that death is better than bondage in this lower order of nature: "Than be so/Better to cease to be" (IV,iii,11.30-31). The two boys decide to join the battle and Arviragus says:

By this sun that shines,
I'll thither: what thing is it that I never
Did see man die! scarce ever look'd on blood,
But that of coward hares, hot goats and venison!
Never bestrid a horse, save one that had
A rider like myself, who ne'er wore rowel
Nor iron on his heel! I am ashamed
To look upon the holy sun, to have
The benefit of his blest beams, remaining
So long a poor unknown.

(IV,iv,11.35-43)

Because of his love for the boys, Belarius agrees to go to Cymbeline's help.

IV

THE GRACIOUS SEASON

In Act Five, through the repentance of Posthumus, Jupiter brings about both the redemption of the individual and of the nation. But, as we shall see, the nature of the god, and the emphasis placed on repentance and forgiveness is fundamentally Christian. In his soliloquy in the beginning of scene one, Posthumus, overcome at the thought of his own sinful deed, forgives Imogen although he still believes she has betrayed him. He says

You married ones,
If each of you should take this course, how many
Must murder wives much better than themselves
For wrying but a little! O Pisanio!
Every good servant does not all commands:
No bond but to do just ones. Gods! if you
Should have ta'en vengeance on my faults, I never
Had lived to put on this: so had you saved
The noble Imogen to repent, and struck
Me, wretch, more worth your vengeance. But alack,
You snatch some hence for little faults; that's love,
To have them fall no more: you some permit
To second ills with ills, each elder worse,
And make them dread it, to the doers' thrift.
(V,i,11.2-15)

Horrified by his deed, he now sees clearly the beam in his own eye, and beside his sins Imogen's fault appears "little". Out of a clear knowledge of his own evil, he can forgive evil in others. Once more he turns to a spiritual authority

outside his self, and once more he sees Imogen as noble and her spiritual repentance as more important than her physical death. He resolves to fight for Britain nobly and there find the death he feels he deserves. He has not yet reached a point where he can forgive himself. But we see a glimpse of the old Posthumus in whom spirit and body, appearance and inner truth, were united, when he prays

Let me make men know,
More valour in me, than my habits show,
Gods, put the strength o' the Leonati in me!
To shame the guise o' the world, I will begin
The fashion, less without and more within.
(V,i,11.28-32)

With this nobility in mind, we see him in the next scene, vanquishing and disarming Iachimo, but not killing him. This mercy to an unknown enemy is to bring mercy to Posthumus, for his valour so impresses Iachimo that his own misdeeds begin to prick his conscience and he repents of his evil. He alone, knows the whole story and the sparing of his life here, causing him to repent, ultimately allows him, because he is alive physically and now spiritually, to confess his wicked deed to Cymbeline and to clear Imogen. Posthumus' nobility, though he is dressed as a peasant, astonishes Iachimo and for the first time he sees that there is some intangible quality of nobility beyond external appearances. He says:

The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
Takes off my manhood: I have belied a lady,
The princess of this country, and the air on't
Revengefully enfeebles me; or could this carl,
A very drudge of nature's, have subdued me

In my profession? Knighthoods and honours, borne
 As I wear mine, are titles but of scorn.
 If that thy gentry, Britain, go before
 This lout as he exceeds our lords, the odds
 Is that we scarce are men and you are gods.
 (V,ii,11.1-10)

Again the image of the very air as having the capacity of enfeebling evil suggest the workings of the heavens, in which Imogen, Posthumus, Guiderius and Arviragus soar.

In the description of the battle, we see how Cymbeline's kingdom "is saved only by the clandestine support of the virtue which he has ignorantly and unjustly banished from it".²³ There are some very revealing images here particularly in the description of Cymbeline who, as Posthumus says, "But that the heavens fought" would be "himself of his wings destitute" (V,iii,1.5). Cymbeline without divine guidance is shorn of his wings. He has already turned away from the heavens and now, but for their help, would lose his kingdom. Here Jupiter has sent men to act as divine agents. Posthumus tells how "'Two boys, an old man twice a boy, a lane,/Preserved the Britons, was the Roman's bane'" (V,iii,11.57-58). In a sense it is youth that has saved Britain; the old man Belarius, is seen as "twice a boy". The first captain describes them in specifically spiritual terms, as Imogen was described earlier, when he says, "Great Jupiter be praised! Lucius is taken./'Tis thought the old man and his sons were angels (V,iii,1.84) and Posthumus, describing the battle says of the boys, "...forthwith they

fly,/Chickens, the way which they stoop'd eagles" (V,iii,1.41). As the eagle is at the top of the bird hierarchy, so the lion is king of the beasts, and, like Posthumus (Leonatus) the boys are described not only as eagles but also as "lions" (V,iii,1.38).

But Posthumus refuses any of the credit for himself and, miserable that death has escaped him, changes back into Roman garments and gives himself up as a traitor. We must look closely at his soliloquy in prison:

Most welcome bondage! for thou art a way,
I think, to liberty: yet am I better
Than one that's sick o' the gout; since he had rather
Groan so in perpetuity than be cured
By the sure physician, death, who is the key
To unbar these locks. My conscience, thou art fetter'd
More than my shanks and wrists: you good gods, give me
The penitent instrument to prick that bolt
Then, free for ever!

(V,iv,11.4-11)

Posthumus' attitude to death echoes both Imogen's and the song of Guiderius and Arviragus. Death is liberation; life is bondage. But he is to learn, through the grace of Jupiter, that the only key to unbar the locks is forgiveness and the only freedom from earthly bondage is life anew in the spirit of God. He goes on to show his repentance:

Is't enough I am sorry?
So children temporal fathers do appease;
Gods are more full of mercy. Must I repent?
I cannot do it better than in gyves,
Desired more than constrain'd: to satisfy,
If of my freedom 'tis the main part, take
No stricter render of me than my all.

(V,iv,11.11-17)

As Posthumus goes on in his speech to offer his life as payment for Imogen's, we realize that he sees the mercy of God still in terms of satisfaction, in terms of an "audit" (V,iv,1.27) like the Old Testament commandment of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.". At this point, he is very like Angelo at the end of Measure for Measure, but Shakespeare goes further in Cymbeline and shows Posthumus, through the vision of Jupiter, the true nature of God's mercy.

In the supplication of Posthumus' dead family to Jupiter, we have a repetition of his history as we know it in the play. Like Perdita and Marina, he is a figure standing for all men who come into the world unprepared for its tempest. Ripped from his mother, he came "crying, 'mongst his foes,/A thing of pity" (V,iv,ll.46-47). As we have seen he grew to natural perfection, as Sicilius says, "Great nature, like his ancestry,/Moulded the stuff so fair" (V,iv,ll.49-50) until no man in Britain could "stand up his parallel" (V.,iv,l.54) and he was married to Imogen. But his family blame Jupiter for his subsequent fall:

Moth. With marriage wherefore was he mock'd,
To be exiled, and thrown
From Leonati seat, and cast
From her his dearest one,
Sweet Imogen?

Sici. Why did you suffer Iachimo,
Slight thing of Italy,
To taint his nobler heart and brain
With needless jealousy;
And to become the geck and scorn
O' th' other's villany?
(V, iv, 11. 58-68)

They suggest that fate, in the figure of Jupiter, is responsible for his fall and not Posthumus himself. But Jupiter, descending on an eagle, suggesting on a national level, Christ, and the holy dove on a universal one, says that the fault is not his, "How dare you ghosts/Accuse the thunderer" (V,iv,11.94-95). Jupiter's justification, "Whom best I love I cross; to make my gift,/The more delay'd, delighted" (V,iv,11.100-101), is certainly Christian. As Paul says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 12:6 "For whom the Lord loueth, he chastneth.". Posthumus like all men has been elected to a spiritual kingdom through the death of Jesus Christ.

While pagan gods are described throughout the play, Jupiter is the only one to which the characters pray directly. Head of the Roman deities, he directs the action of the play, and, as we have seen, both he and the action are envisioned in Christian terms. Shakespeare has used the pagan climate as a means of transmitting essential Christian doctrine. The Christian God in the garments of Jupiter has acted as a divine authority and as the nature of Posthumus' fall into sin was Christian, so is his spiritual redemption.

Although Posthumus doesn't understand his dream, he has found a "golden chance" (V,iv,1.132) and a "rare book" (V,iv,1.133) that are not of this world, for it is not "as in our fangled world, a garment/Nobler than that it covers" (V,iv,11.134-135). The book, though mysterious, promises a

new life of harmony and peace:

'When as a lion's whelp shall, to himself unknown,
without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of
tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be
lopped branches, which being dead many years, shall
after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and
freshly grow; then shall Posthumus end his miseries,
Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and
plenty.'

(V,iv,11.138-145)

In the encounter with the gaoler after the vision, we see how Posthumus' attitude to his own sins has changed. Whereas before he desired death as a means of satisfaction and atonement for his crime, now he no longer cares whether he dies or lives. As Paul writes in the Epistle to the Romans:

For whether we live, we live unto
the Lord; and whether we die, we
die unto the Lord: whether we live
therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.
(14:8)

In the vision Posthumus has found the love and mercy of God and this spiritual comfort has lifted him above the cycle of generation. His being has found forgiveness and the promise of restoration, and now spiritually identified with an eternal Being, he is lifted beyond the mutable world, while still within it. His conversation with the gaoler is very revealing. The gaoler echoes Posthumus earlier when he speaks of death as a means of escape from the pain of life, "O, the charity of a penny chord" (V,iv,1.168), but for Posthumus death is no longer either an escape or a payment in an audit. The gaoler also echoes Hamlet's fears about

the unknown, but for Posthumus, who has found grace, death is only a means to life in God.

First Gaol. ...he that sleeps feels not the toothache: but a man that were to sleep your sleep and a hangman to help him to bed; I think he would change places with his officer; for, look you sir, you know not which way you shall go.

Post. Yes, indeed I do, fellow.

First Gaol. Your death has eyes in's head then; I have not seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some that take upon them to know, or to take upon yourself that which I am sure you do not know, or jump the after inquiry on your own peril: and how you shall speed in your journey's end, I think you'll never return to tell one.

Post. I tell thee fellow, there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink and will not use them.

(V,iv,11.176-194)

Posthumus' eyes are clear. He has once again awakened his faith and fittingly, he is now taken out of his prison. It remains now for Cymbeline's eyes to be cleared.

As H.J. Bryant has suggested, "Cymbeline's regenerative experience comes first as he acknowledges Posthumus' virtue without really knowing who Posthumus is, [and] grants dignities to the brothers and old Belarius without knowing who they are".²⁴ For the first time, since the play began, he can see inner virtue apart from superficial appearance and he acknowledges divine providence. He says to his rescuers:

Stand by my side, you whom the gods have made
Preservers of my throne. Woe is my heart
That the poor soldier that so rightly fought
Whose rags shamed gilded arms, whose naked breast...
Stepp'd before targes of proof, cannot be found...

(V,v,1.1)

There is an obvious play on the word "proof" here — it stands also for material evidence. Cymbeline describes the boys and Belarius as "the liver, heart and brain of Britain,/By whom I grant she lives" (V,v,11.14-15). They have brought new life to Cymbeline's hollow court. When he learns the true nature of the queen another veil is stripped from his eyes. Cornelius first reveals how the queen married Cymbeline only for appearance, for his position.

First, she confess'd she never loved you, only
Affected greatness got by you not you:
 Married your royalty, was wife to your place;
 Abhorr'd your person.

(V,v,11.37-40)

Cymbeline now admits how he was taken in by her appearance and recognizing at last that he has lost his daughter through his tyranny, he calls on the heavens to "mend all". But he still knows nothing of forgiveness. He lords it over Caius, though Caius tries to show him the true nature of Cymbeline's temporal victory when he says:

Consider, sir, the chance of war: the day
 Was yours by accident; had it gone with us,
 We should not, when the blood was cool, have threaten'd
 Our prisoners with the sword.

(V,v,11.75-78)

Only God's works are not subject to chance, and only He has the power to hold the sword over men. However Christ does not bring punishment to the repentant; he brings eternal grace. But Cymbeline still talks of his power as "our grace" (V,v,1.7). Imogen will be spared because "Thou hast look'd thyself into my grace" (V,v,1.95). As king he is God's authority on earth,

but this does not allow him to bandy God's powers. It is only through Posthumus' example in forgiving Iachimo and the restoration of his sons that he comes to see that mercy is not his prerogative to bestow where he will but a gift of the gods that is given to all men that they may give it to others.

When Iachimo confesses Posthumus' first instinct is again to give his life in atonement for his sin: "O, give me cord, or knife or poison,/Some upright justicer" (V,v,1.213), and it is fitting that at this point he repeats symbolically his murder of Imogen. As he knocks down the 'page' who tries to comfort him, Pisanio says, "You ne'er kill'd Imogen till now" (V,v,1.231). In this incident, we have again the action of the sinful man seeking false justice and destroying the grace that would save him. With Imogen restored to him, the mercy of God is shown fully and the reunion of the lovers is shown symbolically as a negation of sin. The love of God for man, exemplified by Jesus Christ, takes Posthumus off his "rock" (V,v,1.263) and back into the Garden. Posthumus says to Imogen, "Hang there like fruit, my soul,/Till the tree die" (V,v,11.264-265). He has found his soul again through God's mercy and he can now forgive Iachimo who kneels before him asking for death. Posthumus says:

Kneel not to me:
The power that I have on you is to spare you;
The malice towards you to forgive you: live,
And deal with others better.

(V,v,11.416-419)

So God's mercy is passed from man to man.

Cymbeline however, still clinging to the idea of rank and just punishment, dooms Guiderius for the death of Cloten because he was "a prince" (V,v,1.291). Guiderius replies that he was "nothing prince-like" (V,v,1.293). Cymbeline still goes by the outer value, Guiderius by the inner. But when Belarius explains and proves the true ancestry of the boys, Cymbeline is forced to realize again that temporal justice is here completely opposed to God's mercy and restoration.

In Belarius' description of the two boys, the imagery now indicates that they unite within themselves natural sanctity and human art--a unity achieved through the heavens. He says: "The benediction of the covering heavens/Fall on their heads like dew! For they are worthy/To inlay heaven with stars" (V,v,11.350-352). As in all myths and folk tales, birth tokens are brought forth to prove the royalty of the boys. But here again human art and nature have both fashioned their birthrights. The "curious mantle" (V,v,1.351) wrought by their mother is joined with Guiderius' mole, "that natural stamp" (V,v,1.367) which was "wise nature's end in the donation,/To be his evidence now" (V,v,11.368-369).

The sentence of death has been fulfilled as rebirth. Cymbeline says "O, what, am I/A mother to the birth of three? Ne'er mother/Rejoiced deliverance more" (V,v,11.370-372). Cymbeline is no longer impotent nor is his line dead. This imagery persists. Belarius speaks of Fidele as "revived from death" (V,v,1.119). Both Imogen's death and the death

of the two heirs have been signs of the spiritual death of Posthumus and Cymbeline. Now all are spiritually reborn and reunited in a "gracious season" (V,v,1.401) that belongs to no temporal season but which transcends the world of generation to find an eternal spiritual world in God. Taking Posthumus' example, Cymbeline can now fulfill Christ's promise at his death: "Pardon's the word to all" (V,v,1.422). The meaning of the "rare" book is now revealed by the soothsayer. Posthumus, the lion's whelp, is united with Imogen, the piece of tender air. Cymbeline, the lofty cedar, a biblical symbol of royalty, has its lopped branches, the two boys, returned.

Cymbeline, recognizing the work of the divine Father of mankind, submits to the father of Britain, Rome, and pays tribute. The soothsayer declares that "the fingers of the powers above do tune/The harmony of this peace" (V,v,11.467-468). He translates his dream of the royal eagle winging to the west as foreshadowing that

...our princely eagle,
The imperial Caesar, should again unite
His favour with the radiant Cymbeline,
Which shines here in the west.
(V,v,11.473-476)

R.E. Moffat writes that "traditionally the purpose of the eagle's flight into the sun was to renew his youth",²⁵ and G. Wilson Knight suggests that the flight indicates a transference of cultural heritage and power from Rome to Britain.²⁶ It is perhaps also an indication of the virtues

of the Roman Catholic Church being taken over and renewed by the Church of England. In any case, there appears to be a transference or handing down of authority from the old king to his young heirs, and from the old empire, Rome, to the young nation, Britain. At any rate the play ends on a note of complete harmony between man and his Creator, husband and wife, father and son, Rome and Britain--the sign perhaps of the harmony of a redeemed world that adumbrates the coming Nativity--the birth of the child who will indeed offer man the chance to regain Paradise. The last speech of the play given by Cymbeline is a prayer of thanksgiving; the last word of the play is "peace".

Laud we the gods;
 And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils
 From our blest altars. Publish we this peace
 To all our subjects. Set we forward: let
 A Roman and a British ensign wave
 Friendly together: so through Lud's-town march:
 And in the temple of great Jupiter
 Our peace we'll ratify; seal it with feasts.
 Set on there! Never was a war did cease,
 Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace.
(V,v,11.476-485)

V

CONCLUSION

In Cymbeline then, we have, as in the story of Christ, the tragic vision of the temporal, mutable world contained and transcended by the comic vision of an eternal unity and harmony in God. The sins of the fallen man, the old Cymbeline, the young Posthumus, and of man as nation, Britain, are undone. Through the grace of God, the demonic has been cast out of human society, the good restored.

In conclusion, it might perhaps be appropriate to relate Cymbeline, in terms of its Christian patterns, to the rest of Shakespeare's romances. All of the plays deal, in varying degrees, with the themes found in Cymbeline: appearance and reality, human art and nature, youth and old age, sin and forgiveness, loss and restoration. They are all, to some extent, biblical or Christian allegories, using archetypal imagery and symbols, demonic and apocalyptic.

The first play of the group, Pericles, is closer than the other plays to both the Old Testament and to Greek drama. It reminds us of the story of Job, which is again reminiscent of the Greek concept of tragedy: the stoic hero whose fall is not so much his own doing, but that of fortune or the blind gods. In Pericles, as in Job of course, divine

providence is not blind--after many trials what has been lost is restored--and so we have not a Greek tragedy, but a Christian comedy. In Pericles, we find the theme of appearance and reality tested in the court of Antioch, a demonic Garden. In the story of Marina amongst the bawds, the theme appears again together with the suggestion of the power of human art to transform its environment. In the whole story of the near death of Thaisa, her restoration by Cerimon, the apparent death of Marina and the recovery of both by Pericles, we have again the workings of divine providence and grace, though not, as suggested, with as strong an awareness of the hero's sinfulness as in Cymbeline.

In Cymbeline, for the first time in the romances, the Christian doctrine of the fall of man through his own sinful nature is depicted. But here man, like Adam in the Garden, has a tempter--the evil queen and Cloten in the case of the old Cymbeline, Iachimo in the case of Posthumus. Still their fall into concupiscence is through their own hubris--they alone are guilty and only after sincere repentance and penance, is the grace of God restored to them and their sins undone. Cymbeline goes beyond Pericles in another sense, relating the plight of the individual man more fully to that of man as king and therefore to the plight of a nation.

The Winter's Tale is even more strictly an allegory of man, who enters the world under the burden of original

sin. Unlike Posthumus and Cymbeline, Leontes has no tempter--no serpent. He is his own devil and his mind, without any outside help, soon confuses appearance and reality, creating illusions that are images of his own will--the will of the sicut deus man, turned away from God through his own hubris. His concupiscence, like Posthumus' and Cymbeline's, is sexual in character and results in the actual death of his son, Mamillius, and the apparent destruction of his wife Hermione and his daughter Perdita. It is only through the realization of his evil, that comes with the death of Mamillius after his refusal to accept the oracle of Apollo, and the sixteen long years of penance under the eye of Paulina (the name is an obvious indication of her function) that he is redeemed through the return of his lost innocence, Perdita, and the restoration of grace and mercy, Hermione. Greater emphasis is placed on the redemption of the whole world of generation, human art and nature, than in Cymbeline and less emphasis on its purely national form.

In The Tempest, Shakespeare breaks the mould. His protagonist is both a fallen man and for a while at least, through the power of his human art, a god. His island is a new Eden over which he rules, keeping imprisoned the dark bestial side of man, personified in the figure of Caliban. Here art rules over nature. Prospero creates illusions to confuse the shipwrecked men, but their apparent drowning is symbolic, for it is a means of baptism, of entrance into

a world in which they will realize their evil and be forgiven. Prospero leads Alonzo to repentance, punishing him with the apparent loss of his son Ferdinand. He allows Caliban to work out his scheme for vengeance in order to enable the beast-like man to realize that he is worshipping false gods, and that his promised redemption when it is seen in terms of justice and revenge is as false as the "book" on which he swears. But in the end Prospero, recognizing that he is not God but a fallen man "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (V,i,1.275) becomes simply God's agent for Christian mercy and restoration.

A detailed study of Cymbeline, from the point of view of its Christian patterns, can provide us with the key to an understanding of the many themes that are reworked in the body of the romances. While there are many differences in the structure of each of the plays, all reflect a common attempt to examine in dramatic form the movement of the wheel of generation, the cycle that is the journey of every man in his lifetime, and to provide through Christianity, a means of transcending it.

NOTES

1. S.L. Bethel, The Winter's Tale: A Study. London: Staples Press Ltd., 1937, p.74.
2. H.M.V. Matthews, Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, p.190.
3. J.A. Bryant, Hippolyta's View. Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1961, p.212.
4. Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1963, p.15.
5. Ibid., p.16.
6. Ibid., p.19.
7. The divisions and groupings are Frye's; the examples are my own.
8. The theory expounded by Northrop Frye in his essay, Myth, Fiction, and Displacement in Fables of Identity, p.21.
9. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959, p.51.
10. Ibid., p.73.
11. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol.2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p.52.
12. Ibid., p.51.
13. Ibid., p.35.
14. G.Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1948, p.166.
15. R.E. Moffat, "Cymbeline and the Nativity", Shakespeare Quarterly, XIII (1962), p.208.
16. Ibid., p.211.
17. G.Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life, p.142.

18. Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: The Last Phase. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954, p.48.
19. Ibid., footnote p.49.
20. Robert Graham Hunter, Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1965, p.150.
21. Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: The Last Phase, p.60.
22. Robert Graham Hunter, Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness, p.158.
23. Ibid., p.166.
24. J.A. Bryant, Hippolyta's View, p.203.
25. R.E. Moffat, "Cymbeline and the Nativity", p.217.
26. G. Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life, p.166.

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