

SAA seminar: *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*  
Convenor: Professor Adam Smyth (Oxford University)  
Abstracts by Participants

**Jane Hwang Degenhardt**

Fiction and the Presenting of a Better World in *Spring* and *Pericles*

My paper will focus on the intertextual relationship between Ali Smith's *Spring* and *Pericles*, and in particular on how both texts embrace fiction as a medium that renders the impossible *possible*. In *Spring*, the twelve-year old heroine is described as "someone or something out of a legend or a story" because she achieves the impossible by making "people behave like they should, or like they live in a different better world" (314). Similarly, in *Pericles*, Marina defies our expectations of what is possible by retaining her virginity as an employee in a brothel and spontaneously converting her customers into penitents. Both young heroines share in common an ability to live unscathed in the 'real' world and to access a better world by moving between 'real' and 'unreal' worlds--an ability that *Spring* and *Pericles* seem to ascribe to fiction itself. In providing access to a better world by presenting the impossible, these texts also suggest that fiction affords a different way of seeing the world that makes visible that which appears to be invisible. In *Spring*, invisibility becomes resignified as a kind of superpower that affords mobility across highly patrolled barriers and borders, just as fiction acts a medium that enables illicit crossings of temporal, spatial, geographical, and metaphysical boundaries. I demonstrate how *Spring* adapts *Pericles'* theory of fiction to address the plight of present-day refugees by showing how fiction's affordance of the impossible is achieved through its ability to access an invisible world and to render visible those unseen.

**Kim Huth**

A Tale Too Tedious to Repeat: *Pericles* and Narrative Silence

*Pericles* is generally classified as one of Shakespeare's "lesser-known" plays, a categorization that both reflects and perpetuates its status as infrequently taught in the high school and university classrooms. This first entry in the genre of romance is dismissed (in the words of SparkNotes' "No Fear Shakespeare" guide to the text but representative of many critical assessments) as "something of a messy play" with a plot that is "repetitive and silly at times"—ample justification, it seems, to omit *Pericles* in favor of better, more valuable examples of Shakespeare's works. This paper will interrogate the assumptions implicit in such relational value judgments and how they contribute to the construction and pedagogical propagation of a certain idea of Shakespeare and his writing: one that privileges single authorship above collaborative playwriting, that prioritizes conventional dramatic structure over alternative methods of knowing, and that downplays challenges to a critical practice that conceptualizes interpretation as the production of coherence. Using *Pericles* as both a test case and as a source of literary theory about the purposes of narrative, this paper will demonstrate how the play provides explicit commentary not only on telling a story but also on how the decision is made *not* to tell a story, thus providing opportunity to expose the suppositions behind our own pedagogic and critical choices in the cultural construction of "Shakespeare."

## **Kent Lehnhof**

### Marina's Voice

In *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Marina does not say a word until act 4, yet her speaking part ends up outstripping that of every other character, aside from Pericles and Gower.<sup>1</sup> The sound of her voice fills the final acts, where it resonates with a peculiar potency. Simply by speaking, Marina manages to save herself from violation and exploitation, make a living for herself and others, reform the moral character of individuals in power, and give new life to her disconsolate father. Marina's success as a speaker is no doubt enabled by her skill as a rhetor, but the play indicates in several ways that the power and significance of her speech encompasses more than the verbal content she expresses and the rhetorical strategies she adopts. This essay seeks to account for the vitality of Marina's voice in this late romance by drawing on the work of Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Adriana Cavarero--each of whom thinks deeply about the non-semantic or extra-linguistic significance of speech, as well as the ethical efficacy of the human voice.

## **Sharon O'Dair**

She is good and speaks so well: Ali Smith, Shakespeare, Contemporary Migration.

In *Spring* (2019), Ali Smith addresses the problem of global migration today, a problem increasingly rooted in climate change. I say problem rather than "crisis," as Smith and many reviewers of *Spring* do, because crisis implies—or requires—a solution. A crisis has an *end*. The problem of migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not end but become more problematic.

As Adam Smyth notes, *Spring* isn't an adaptation of *Pericles*, but the novel's teenage Florence mirrors Shakespeare's Marina pretty well. Marina in *Pericles* is *good*, one fit for the gods. In the brothel, she preaches divinity and persuades men not to whore. Lysimachus says, "Thou art a piece of virtue, and I doubt not but thy training hath been noble." If he could be sure of her status, he would marry her.

Like Marina, Florence is *good*, with a golden voice, who thereby springs prostitutes and spurs authorities in migrant detention centers do their jobs. Unlike Marina, Florence isn't reunited with her noble parents, with a noble marriage someday in the offing. Only briefly is Florence reunited with her mother before she is released to the streets. One cannot say of Florence that her goodness implies high social status and a reprieve from an awful fate.

In a democratic age, it's understandable that Smith avoids *that* lesson from *Pericles*. But what does individual, demotic *goodness* offer readers, students, citizens, and migrants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? As we face unprecedented migration, does Smith or Shakespeare offer tools to assess the problem? Can the problem be addressed by the option of "strong borders" or "no borders"? If not, does Smith or Shakespeare move us beyond those options? If neither does, what are we doing in our writings and in our classrooms? This paper, then and I hope, will be about method.

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<sup>1</sup> Playshakespeare.com credits Pericles with 597 lines, Gower with 307, and Marina with 182. See <https://www.playshakespeare.com/study/complete-shakespeare-character-list>. Accessed 16 Feb 2021.

## **Marsha Robinson**

### Diana's Knights: Virginal Fencers on the Shakespearean Stage

Shakespeare's representation of women as Diana's acolytes engaged in "virginal fencing" (*Per.* 4.5.62) places them in a long history of female resistance to male abuse. That history has recently resurfaced in real world #MeToo accounts of sexual assault in the workplace and the outraged voices of women urging their sisters to arm themselves against male sexual predators or fall victim to powerful and entitled men who Anne Helen Peterson argues "can and will ruin our lives." Hero, Diana's "virgin knight" (5.3.13) from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare's aptly named character, Diana, of *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Pericles'* Marina are all engaged in virginal fencing with powerful males. The slain Hero of *Much Ado* is robbed of her chastity, a victim of patriarchal misogyny. Diana of *All's Well* participates with her alter-ego Helena in a female conspiracy; a confederacy of women stage the arraignment and surrender of an entitled sexual predator. Putting on the "whole armor of God," Marina engages with male lust in the brothel. She is represented as a woman wrestling not with "flesh and blood" but against "principalities" and "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6.11-12). In each case the tactics of "virginal fencing" invoke the varied and variable Renaissance constructions of Diana as goddess of chastity. Moreover, Shakespeare's iterations of Diana shift in nuance in accordance with generic parameters.

## **Stephen Spiess**

### Confounding Relations: Glossing the Brothel in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

This paper examines the various and contestatory relations that can be evinced at the level of the scholarly gloss. To do so, I channel attention to a single term ("lowne") that surfaces in the Mytilene brothel and that conventionally has been glossed as a class-based derogative akin to "peasant," "scamp," or "low-bred fellow." Both in modern editions of *Pericles* and elsewhere, the early modern "lowne" has been presented to modern readers as a stable if archaic term of disparagement applicable to low-born men. As I will demonstrate, however, the early modern "lowne" could also index the sexually illicit woman, the lewd man, the person who copulates, and the mischievous boy. In *Pericles*, moreover, the term arises not alone but rather as part of a seemingly illogical conjunction, in "Lorde *and* Lowne," whose confounding—and potentially erotic—affiliation threatens to collapse the very differences that set them apart. The glossing of "lowne," I therefore suggest, opens onto larger questions of methodology and critical praxis: how does one determine the proper terms of a glossarial reference? When and where should the chain of citation cease, pause, go silent, or become invisible? When *must* we account for those other histories, inflections, relations, and proximities that inhabit, touch, or circulate around a given term? How can we best account for, as J.R. Firth memorably puts it, the "company that [a word] keeps?" Reading these and other possibilities across an editorial tradition which has restricted such lexical, conceptual, and identarian entanglements, I reposition the editorial gloss not simply as a site for linguistic explication, but as a critical apparatus through which early modern social identities continue to be forged, contested, adjudicated, and (un)critically reproduced.

## **Jesús Tronch**

## Authorial attribution in the editing of *Pericles*, 1972-2021

This paper is a descriptive and comparative analysis of critical editions of *Pericles* in order to answer the question of how the play's attribution to Shakespeare as sole author, or to Shakespeare and Wilkins, has affected editorial decisions and the resulting edited texts. Generally critical editions are bound to differ by virtue of not only the editors' attitudes (more conservatist, more interventionist), but also of the innumerable combinations of possible decisions in retaining or emending readings in the base text (in their turn depending on different views about its textual provenance) and in the modernization of punctuation (and of spelling, to a less extent); but this paper seeks to find out to what extent the editors' assumption of divergent authorial attributions for the play's first two acts (or the first eleven scenes) result in different edited texts of *Pericles* in practical terms. On the basis of attribution studies by Lake (1969, 1970), Smith (1987), Hope (1994), Vickers (2002) and especially Jackson (2003), Wilkins has been accepted as the play's co-author, responsible for the first two acts, in almost all the most important editions published in the last fifty years, those by Taylor and Jackson (Oxford, 1986 and 1987), Warren (Oxford, 2003), Gossett (Arden, 2004), Bate and Rasmussen (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2007), Potter (Norton, 2016) and Loughnane (New Oxford, 2016 and 2017). By contrast, Edward's New Penguin 1976 edition and Delvecchio and Hammond's New Cambridge 1998 edition stick to Shakespeare's single authorship, while Evans (Riverside, 1997) declares the first two acts as of uncertain authorship and Bevington (1997) remains non-concomittant regarding the attribution to Wilkins. The analysis also tackles the so-called "brothel" scenes (19, 22, 23), regarded as "primarily Shakespearean, but possibly mixed authorship" (Taylor and Loughnane 2017, p. 571).