# ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCES

(Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest)

From the Restoration Period to the End

of the Nineteenth Century

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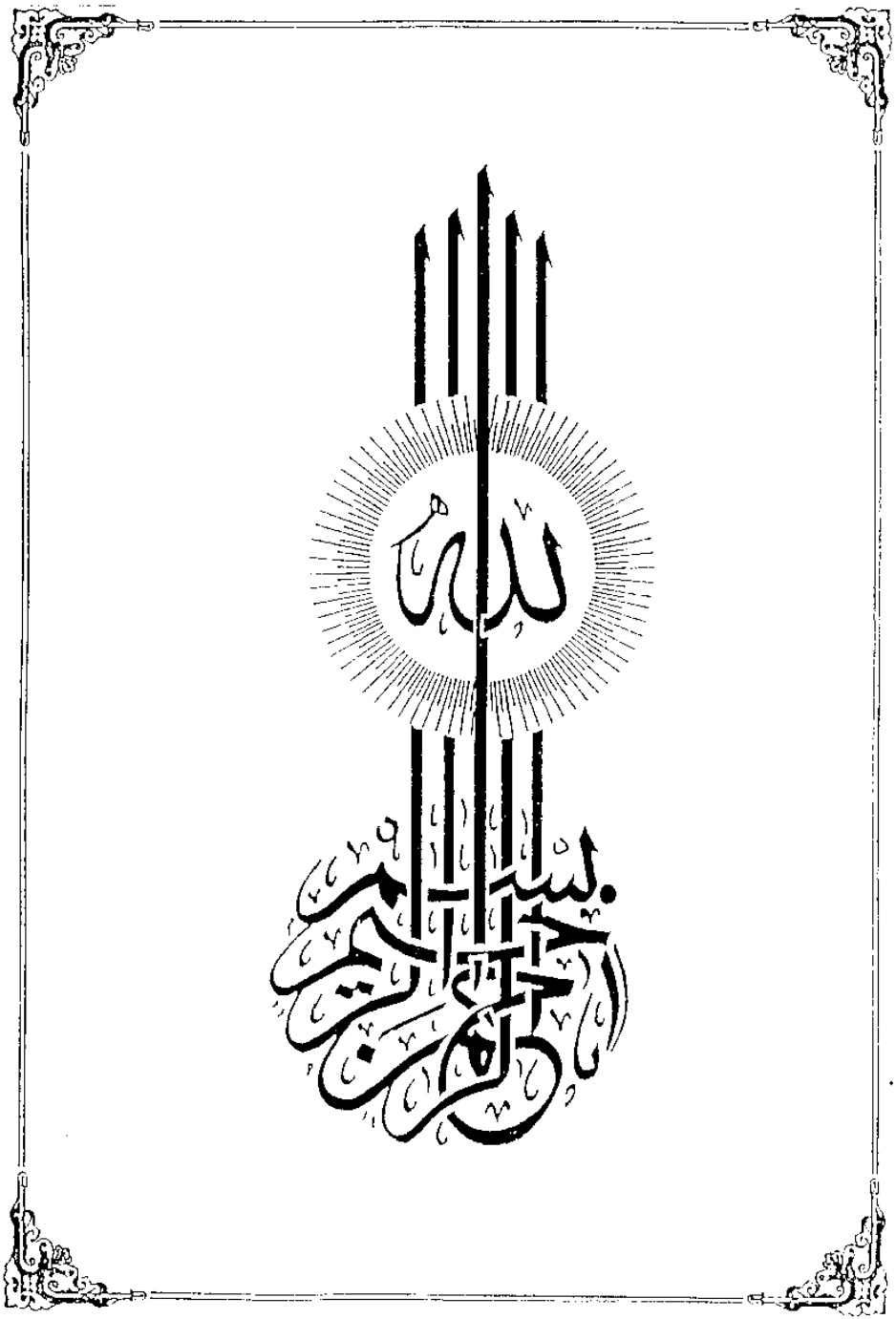

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# PREFACE

Such is the popularity of Shakespeare's plays nowadays - besides the availability of these plays in different editions - that it seems rather difficult to come to terms with the fact that for over two centuries, from the Restoration to the end of the Victorian age, his plays were rarely, if ever, acted as he originally penned them. During this period the theatres witnessed a continual process of adapting Shakespeare's texts to the taste of the audience, a prevalent critical theory or theatrical exigency. These adaptations were largely dismissed by Shakespearean scholars whose concern was for the preservation of the original texts. However, twentieth century scholarly interest in Shakespearean theatre criticism pioneered by George Odell in his Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (1921) and Allardyce Nicoll in his Dryden as an Adapter of Shakespeare (1922) paved the way for an objective evaluation of these works.

Shakespeare's romances: Pericles (1609), Cymbeline (1610), The Winter's Tale (1611) and The Tempest (1612) were subjected to various adaptations. Full-length studies of these adaptations, mostly dissertations, are few and deal with single plays: Mary Margaret Nilan, "The Stage History of The Tempest : A Question of Theatricality," (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1967), Don Sheldon Casanave, "Shakespeare's Tempest in a Restoration Context: A Study of Dryden's Enchanted Island," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1972), Irene Golden Dash, "Changing

Attitudes towards Shakespeare as Reflected in Editions and Staged Adaptations of The Winter's Tale from 1703 to 1762," (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972) and Dennis Bartholomeusz, The Winter's Tale in Performance in England and America 1611-1976 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). This dissertation attempts a study of the adaptations of Shakespeare's four romances from the Restoration to the end of the nineteenth century in the light of changing literary and theatrical conditions.

The First Chapter is an introduction that attempts a survey of the critical reaction to the process of adaptation. Unfavourable views in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gradually gave way to a more balanced approach that would view these works objectively in the light of the literary/theatrical conditions of the age in which they were produced. A survey of the elements of drama that undergo alteration is proposed for a literary approach involves changes in theme, structure and style while theatrical considerations mainly introduce spectacular splendour. The chapter ends with a survey of criticism of Shakespeare's romances. Thematic and structural affinities that exist in the four plays, but which are variously modified in adaptation, are pointed at.

The Second Chapter deals with those first attempts at adapting Shakespeare's romances in the Restoration period. William Davenant's Duke's Men and Killigrew's King's Men, the

two patent theatre companies, catered for a new audience made up mainly of the courtiers and fashionable society who were frivolous and cynical and looked upon the theatre as a pastime. The insatiable demand of the new audience for novelty and change that could not be matched by the dramatists of the age was the main cause for the revivals of earlier Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline plays. Neo-classicism as well as the current philosophy of Thomas Hobbes left their mark on the drama of the age.

The chapter also reveals the unpopularity of Shakespeare on Restoration stage in its early days. It was only when Davenant determined to "reform and make fit" his share of pre-Restoration plays that Shakespeare's adaptations met with success. The scenic stage was first introduced, music and operatic elements were added and the plays themselves were tackled in such a way so as to mend what Restoration dramatists thought was lack of wit, weak plots and lack of decorum that fell below the standards of the new age.

The second half of the chapter deals with the adaptations of **The Tempest** and **Cymbeline**, the two romances that were adapted for the Restoration stage. Dryden and Davenant's **The Tempest or The Enchanted Island** (1670), Thomas Shadwell's **The Tempest or The Enchanted Island** (1674) Thomas Duffet's **The Mock-Tempest or The Enchanted Castle** (1675), and Thomas D'Urfey's **The Injured Princess or The Fatal Wager** (1682) were moulded to suit the new conditions of

he age. Pericles and The Winter's Tale were unwelcome as heir material and structure offended the neo-classical aste. On the whole, romances were not appreciated for their hematic concerns of reconciliation, forgiveness and edemption but were used as vehicles upon which the lestoration dramatist could try their skills.

The Third Chapter deals with the eighteenth century adaptations of the romances. The first half of the chapter reviews the eighteenth century theatrical tradition which was different from the light-hearted gaiety of the Restoration, showing the process of development dictated by different elements: the neo-classical trend as in the works of Addison, Pope and Dr. Johnson and the emergence of the moralistic tendency for reform which eventually led to the appearance of sentimental drama together with the pre-romantic tendencies that flourished in the latter half of the century.

This chapter also points out the wide variety of theatrical activity that strove to indirectly break the monopoly of the patent theatres and the emergence of the actor-manager tradition. Critical opinion was still under the influence of neo-classicism whose exponents , Nicholas Rowe, Alexander Pope, and Thomas Hanmer produced the first critical editions of Shakespeare's plays. However, critical appreciation of Shakespeare amounted to a tendency to justify his departure from the rules - a tendency that offered

a balanced view of Shakespeare on the grounds that his genius and imagination excused his want of disciplined art. By the middle of the eighteenth century an attitude developed that placed Shakespeare above the rules and acknowledged his genius over classical authority. By the end of the century a complete vindication of Shakespeare is effected; this can be seen in pre-romantic emphasis on his characterization and on the gothic and sublime in his plays.

The second half of the chapter deals with the adaptations of the romances which offered the adapters a chance to stress the element of victimisation, remorse and the triumph of virtue; hence the return of **Pericles** and **The Winter's Tale**, though in adapted forms. MacNamara Morgan's adaptation of **The Winter's Tale**, **Florizel and Perdita** (1754), echoed the influence of the receding neo-classicism together with the new tendency to use Shakespeare's lines. It was followed by David Garrick's **Florizel and Perdita** (1756) in which he attempted to restore more of Shakespeare's original. It was praised by some critics as giving elegant form to a bad composition while others resented Garrick's omissions of some fine passages. Garrick's main concern, however, is theatrical and his main emphasis centres round Leontes' character which he played himself. Literary adaptations of **The Winter's Tale** were attempted by Charles Marsh and George Coleman but were poor theatrical pieces. Garrick also presented **Cymbeline** (1785) which held the stage till the end of the century in a version which was faithful to

Shakespeare's original while being theatrically convenient Two other unstageworthy adaptations were written by Charles Marsh and William Hawkins whose approach was purely literary with no consideration for stage presentation. Pericles was adapted by George Lillo as Marina (1738) with sentimental and didactic additions. The chapter concludes with an assertion that although ethical and neo-classical standards were applied to the adaptations of the romances yet they gradually gave way to appreciation of Shakespeare's original texts.

The Fourth Chapter begins with a discussion of the irreconcilable arguments concerning the performance of Shakespeare's plays in the Victorian period. The controversy concerning the discrepancy between Shakespearean criticism and production began in the first half of the century. The chapter shows how the taste of the audience for the spectacular in the theatre was paralleled and satisfied by the technological and architectural development in the nineteenth century. Concrete illustration of images and historical verisimilitude were in demand and was supplied by stage-managers thanks to the development in stage craft, settings, scenery and pictorial effect of the proscenium-arch stage.

The chapter deals with nineteenth century eminent actor-managers and their adaptations of Shakespeare's romances. It is noteworthy that any adaptations of Shakespeare's plays

were only theatrically conceived. John Philip Kemble produced **The Winter's Tale** (1802), **Cymbeline** (1817) and the **Tempest** (1789) and (1817). His productions were mainly marked by scenic exhibition and preserving as much of Shakespeare's text as possible. Macready followed in Kemble's footsteps in his attempt to couple Shakespeare's lines with spectacular production. His major productions of Shakespeare's romances were **Cymbeline** (1843) and **The Tempest** (1838). Samuel Phelps aimed in his small theatre, Sadler's Wells, to benefit from breaking the moncpoly of the patent theatres and do justice to Shakespeare's poetry. His most important productions of Shakespeare's romances were **The Winter's Tale** (1845), **The Tempest** (1845) and **Pericles** (1854). Charles Kean was known for his passion for historical and archaeological accuracy and elaborate settings which he made use of in two major productions of **The Winter's Tale** (1856) and **The Tempest** (1857). Henry Irving, the last eminent actor-manager in the nineteenth century, famous for his productions at the Lyceum, coupled scenic splendour with technological advance. His production of **Cymbeline** (1896) was memorable and occasioned G.B.Shaw's criticism on nineteenth century theatrical adaptation of Shakespeare. The chapter concludes that spectacle was the common factor in the different productions of the romances in the nineteenth century and that the adaptations of Shakespeare's romances were subjected to purely theatrical considerations.

A conclusion sums up the salient points of this study in

an attempt to point out the development that the adaptation of Shakespeare's romances underwent from the Restoration to the end of the nineteenth century.

(References to Shakespeare's romances are from the Arden edition. Adapted versions and some seventeenth and eighteenth century critical material are referred to in their unedited originals or facsimiles, hence the language peculiarities).

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The Drama Dictionary defines "adaptation" as "the alteration of the text by cutting words and characters, or by adding material and remodelling the action. An adaptation generally responds to theatre conditions, such as the taste of the audience, the theatre's budget and the requirements of censorship". (1)

The practice of adapting or altering the dramatic works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) seems to be a prominent feature in the stage history of almost all Shakespearian plays from the Restoration in 1660 to the beginnings of the twentieth century. Thanks to the pioneering role of Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946) Shakespeare came to be presented in original texts as well as under theatrical conditions that used to accommodate the first productions in the theatre of Shakespeare's time. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) mockingly writes,

> The practice of improving Shakespeare's plays, more especially in the matter of supplying them with what are called happy endings, is an old-established one which has always been accepted without protest by British audiences. When Mr. Harley Granville-Barker, following up some desperate experiments by the late William Poel, introduced the startling innovation of performing the plays in the West End of London exactly as Shakespeare wrote them, there was indeed some demur; but it was expressed outside the theatre and led to no rioting. And it set on foot a new theory

of Shakespearean representation. (2)

Shaw with his tongue in his cheek elaborates this point of view saying,

> Up to that time it had been assumed that everyone behind the scenes in a theatre must know much better than Shakespeare how plays should be written ... But the pleasure given by Mr. Granville-Barker's productions shook that conviction in the theatre; and the superstition that Shakespeare's plays as written by him are impossible on the stage, which had produced a happy ending to King Lear , Cibber's Richard III, a love scene in the tomb of the Capulets between Romeo and Juliet before the poison takes effect, and had culminated in the crude literary butcheries successfully imposed on the public and the critics as Shakespeare's plays by Henry Irving and Augustin Daly at the end of the last century, is for the moment heavily discredited. (3)

This unfavourable view of adapting Shakespeare brings Shaw - in theory rather than in practice as he is guilty of the sin he denounces - in line with a long list of opponents to the practice of adaptation. Adverse critical comments start as early as the Restoration period at the outset of adapting Shakespeare. Richard Flecknoe in his Sir William Davenant's Voyage to the Other World (1688) imagines a meeting in the other world between Shakespeare and William Davenant (1606-1668), "Nay even Shakespeare, whom he thought to have found his greatest friend, was as much offended with him [Davenant] as any of the rest for so spoiling and mangling his plays". (4) A similar view is expressed by an anonymous poet in Epilogue to the Ordinary (1673), "Now empty shows must want of sense supply,/ Angels shall dance and

Macbeth's witches fly". (5)

In the eighteenth century, unfavourable opinions of the adaptations of Shakespeare are expressed by some critics. Those undertaken by David Garrick (1717-1779), though theatrically successful, aroused critical indignation. Frances Brooke, for instance, writes concerning the preference of performing Nahum Tate's adapted version of **King Lear** ,

> It has always been a matter of great astonishment to me that both the houses [Covent Garden and Drury Lane] have given Tate's alteration of **King Lear** in preference to Shakespeare's excellent original ... And one cannot help remarking particularly, and with some surprise, that Mr. Garrick, who professes himself so warm an idolator of this inimitable poet ... should yet prefer the adulterated cup of Tate to the genuine draught offered him by the master he avows to serve with such fervency of devotion. (6)

Similarly, Theophilus Cibber in **Two Dissertations on Theatrical Subjects** (1756) launches a bitter attack on the adaptations current in his time,

> Were Shakespeare's ghost to rise, would he not frown indignation on this pilfering pedlar in poetry [Garrick] who thus shamefully mangles, mutilates and emasculates his plays ? The **Midsummer Night's Dream** has been minc'd and fricaseed into an indigested and unconnected thing call'd the **Fairies; The Winter's Tale** mammoc'd into a droll; **The Taming of the Shrew** made a farce of; and **The Tempest** castrated into an opera ! (7)

The nineteenth century stage witnessed the return of original texts, which though free from rewriting, are subjected to omissions and transpositions, while spectacular scenic effects gain in importance over Shakespeare's verse