

## Ceremonies and Time in Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>

Alison Findlay, Department of English, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

The lavish christening ceremony which concludes *All Is True* licenses an ingenious playfulness with time that is found throughout the Shakespearean canon. The presiding Archbishop Cranmer promises words of ‘truth’ to on-stage fictional characters and off-stage spectators, who occupy different temporal zones but are brought together by the ceremony as witnesses and celebrants. His speech collapses chronological boundaries between past, present and future, enacting a process that is typical of ceremony. He speaks simultaneously in the present moment of performance, the fictional past of Henrician England and the historical present of Jacobean Britain when he announces that ‘this royal infant’, Princess Elizabeth, ‘yet now promises / Upon this land a hundred thousand blessings / Which time shall bring to ripeness’ (5.4.18-20). The speech is both prophecy and eulogy. Although Elizabeth will die a ‘maiden phoenix’, her ashes will, ‘create another heir / As great in admiration as herself’ in James (5.4.40-42). Cranmer looks forward to a future that memorializes not just Elizabeth but also James, and, self-consciously, the great age of Shakespearean drama too: ‘Our children’s children / Shall see this and bless heaven’ (5.4.54-5). The ceremonial moment allows the speaker to transcend chronological time, creating a dynamic continuity between past, present and future that invokes us, the generations of children’s children who ‘see this’ performed on stages over a span of 400 years. The role of Archbishop, along with the full panoply of Anglican ritual in costume, gesture, and Christian rhetoric, point to the way ceremony invariably draws its authority from a connection with the divine.

This essay argues that, across Shakespeare’s writing career and canon, staged ceremonies are heightened moments which tease out the complexities of time. They make connections between *chronos*, or the flow of chronological time, and *aion*, eternity. In doing so, they engage questions of ontology, belief, agency, predestination, value, and they invoke profound emotional responses. They are therefore far from superficial, despite their frequent use of spectacle. I propose that ceremonies on stage function as moments of *kairos*. This

concept of time from ancient Greek philosophy and rhetoric has no verbal equivalent in English so I will begin by outlining its qualities in order to explain how ceremonies enact *kairos* and how Shakespeare's use of the English word 'time' refer to it. In its most complex incarnations, *kairos* holds two opposing ideas of 'timeliness' in dynamic tension. The paradoxical quality of *kairos* goes back to its first appearance, lexically and conceptually, in Homer's *Iliad*, where, as Phillip Sipiora observes, 'it denotes a vital or lethal place in the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury and therefore necessitates special protection' (Sipiora 116). From the outset, then, *kairos* is linked to the fundamentals of human experience: vitality and death.

The two opposing understandings of *kairos* as 'timeliness' that developed with reference to classical rhetoric are usefully explained by Carolyn R. Miller. For Cicero and the Stoics, *kairos* is 'associated with propriety and decorum'; timeliness in this sense involves rhetorical 'accommodation to convention' and 'predictability' (Miller 2002). In Shakespeare, this sense of *kairos* informs the Elizabethan consciousness of history as cyclical, summarised neatly by Warwick in *2 Henry IV*:

There is a history in all men's lives  
 Figuring the nature of the times deceased  
 The which observed, a man may prophesy,  
 With a near aim, of the main chance of things  
 As yet not come to life, who in their seeds  
 And weak beginnings lie intreasurèd.  
 Such things become the hatch and brood of time;

(3.1.75-81)

Henry IV and Warwick acknowledge the cyclical 'hatch and brood' of time as the working of 'necessities' (3.1.87-8), a 'revolution of the times' governed by the 'book of fate' (3.1.44-5). However, they are simultaneously aware that the 'chance of things / As yet not come to life' relies on the choices taken at significant moments in individual 'men's lives.' Indeed, Henry's own sovereignty has been established by such a timely moment of opportunity.

This is a very different understanding of *kairos*, attributed to Gorgias and a school of relativist or process philosophy, which sees ‘timeliness’ as a ‘uniquely meaningful’ human action in ‘unfolding and unprecedented circumstances’ (Miller xx). Timeliness in this sense is associated with grasping opportunity in response to change, and with a philosophy of Becoming. Lady Macbeth’s feeling ‘the future in the instant’ which can transport her from the ‘ignorant present’ (1.5.55-7) is probably the most concise expression of *kairos* as opportunity in Shakespeare, drawing on an emblematic tradition where *Occasio* is personified poised on a wheel or sphere, offering a long forelock to be seized (Baumlin 148). As Carolyn Miller observes, the most interesting rhetorics from ancient times to contemporary practice set these diametrically opposing dimensions of *kairos* side by side.

I argue that ceremony is a multi-media ‘rhetoric’ of this type, keeping both the propriety or predictability, and the uniquely timely, or radically particular moment in balance. Participants in a ceremony adhere to a set of scripted conventions, as in Ciceronian Stoic theory, while the enactment for all involved is also a uniquely meaningful moment of Becoming or change. Stagings of ceremony in Shakespeare’s plays manage the productive tension between the two in dazzlingly seductive ways in order to bring *out* the puzzling questions of human existence which ceremonies distil, and to bring *in* spectators’ emotional and intellectual engagement with those issues. As noted above, the ceremony in *All Is True* looks to the past and the future simultaneously, incorporating participants in a moment of *kairos* which is ‘history in the making’ (Smith 55). Paul Tillich remarks that for those ‘conscious of an ongoing creative life’, time is ‘laden with tensions, with possibilities and impossibilities. Not everything is possible at every time, not everything is true at every time, nor is everything demanded at every moment. ... In this tremendous, most profoundly stirred consciousness of history is rooted the idea of the *kairos*’ (Tillich 33).

As Lady Macbeth, Warwick and Cranmer all recognise, however, the ‘chance of things not yet come to life’ in *kairos* is not just chance in the sense of opportunity. It is also the ‘right time’ determined by what Lady Macbeth calls ‘fate and metaphysical aid’ (1.5.28). Phillip Sipiora points out that ‘the kairic dative of time also suggests something like “God’s

Time,” (Sipiora 115). Thought of in these terms, *kairos* intersects with *chronos*, and *occasion*, or opportunity, linking these with *aion*, an eternity separate from the rhythms and flows of chronological, earthly time. In early modern thought *aion* is often conceived as encircling chronological time as in Wither’s Emblem XL which presents Time as ‘a Flowre, *that’s found / Within Eternities wide Round*’ (Wither 1635 cited in Baumlin 154). A striking example of how early moderns understood *kairos* as the intersection of “God’s time” with earthly opportunity appears in John Calvin’s *Commentarie upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romanes*, translated by Christopher Rosdell in 1583. Commenting on Chapter 13, verse 11, Calvin notes ‘He [Paul] saith, the time or season is knowen to the faithfull, because the day of Gods calling and visitation requireth newe life and newe maners, as for exposition sake he addeth afterwarde, it is time to arise. For it is not *Chronos* but *Kairos*, by which worde is noted the occasion or fit time.’ (Calvin 1583: fol.176v).

Theologian Paul Tillich’s book *The Protestant Era* identified the need for *kairos*, exceptional moments outside the flow of chronological time, in situations of crisis or change such as the Reformation experienced by John Calvin. It is perhaps no surprise that Shakespeare and Fletcher dramatize that historical moment of change in a play that is, arguably, the most ceremonial in the canon. Tillich himself was coming to terms with the radical shift in Western culture which followed the decline in religious belief in the twentieth century. Devan Stahl argues that, for Tillich, the ultimate goal is to create “‘theonomous moments’ wherein secular culture and religion are brought together’. Although such moments are ‘always temporary and finite for Tillich’ (Stahl 2014: 268), their potential to connect everyday life with deep religious experience, especially in times of crisis, makes them extremely valuable. Tillich’s liberal Protestant theology is helpful for reading the deep significance of ceremonies. His word ‘theonomous’, to describe a temporary, finite moment

replete with meaning-giving power, perfectly describes the metaphysical dimension of *kairos* and ceremony.

From a secular perspective, anthropologists such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner have analysed the Janus-faced quality of ceremonies: their enactment in the present looks backwards to past traditions and forwards to inaugurate new social relations in order to manage change. Ceremonies orchestrate a set form of words, gestures, costumes, props within a specified venue, according to traditional or accustomed practice to create an ‘occasion’ which gives shape to ‘liminality’; that which ‘eludes or slips through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space’ (Turner 95). The key points of change in the chronological span of human life (for example, birth, adulthood, betrothal, marriage, retirement, death) are managed emotionally and socially by what van Gennep called rites of passage. Ritual practice enacts three phases: separation, liminality or levelling, and reincorporation. The same processes operate on a macrocosmic scale to manage changes of monarchy, leadership or government.

With these ideas about ceremony as *kairos* in mind, I now turn to consider how *staged* ceremony works. A theatrical performance is, like a ceremony, a space and time protectively separated from the everyday flow of *chronos*, though paradoxically governed by the ‘two hours traffic’ of commercial exchange which inevitably puts any enunciation of ‘redeeming’ or ‘wasting’ time into a definition of *kairos* as profit (Wilson: 1981). Furthermore, all those in the theatre are aware that any ceremony represented on stage is empirically ‘false’. Nevertheless, unique non-material profits can be gained from playing and witnessing a ceremony in the theatre. Because ceremonies and rituals are themselves performative (what Henry V calls idle / idol ceremony *HV* 4.1.236), their re-enactment is, in some sense, true to the ‘originals’. The displacement of a ceremony to a fictional arena does not necessarily diminish its affective power. Spectators and actors bring their individual and

collective experiences in chronological time together to experience the *kairic* moment of performance. As Phillip Sipiora remarks, ‘*kairos* always contextualizes or mediates circumstances, usually in making situations conducive for the persuasive act of belief and trust, which lead in turn to changes in conviction, emotion, and action’ (Sipiora 2002: 120). The staging of fictional ceremonies gives space and time to experience these transformative effects safely, and perhaps to translate the personal, political and spiritual insights into action. The familiarity with, if not direct experience of, traditional ceremonies, makes their affective power transhistorical too. For this reason, ceremonies can, I believe, function as temporal wormholes: giving points of cultural and affective access to Shakespeare for spectators watching 400 years later.

The rest of this essay analyses staged ceremonies of increasing complexity to demonstrate Shakespeare’s growing confidence in theatre as a practice through which spectators can experience the fullness of time. I begin by reading betrothal in *All’s Well That Ends Well* to illustrate how the critical concepts of time outlined above interact in these heightened moments of ceremony. I then make a broader survey of how *kairic* moments contribute to the making of history in the first tetralogy. Finally, I consider the staging of theonomous ceremonies in *The Winter’s Tale*.

The ceremony of betrothal in *All’s Well* proceeds in an agonizingly contorted fashion through chronological and stage time, but such a disrupted linear plot creates opportunities to use ceremony’s *kairic* qualities. Diana tells Bertram that, as chronological time proceeds, their exchange of rings ‘May token to the future our past deeds’ (4.2.62). Diana imagines the betrothal as commitment to a future plotted by herself and Helena, who will swap places in the bedchamber. A ceremonial swapping of rings will recall the past and remake the future. This is precisely the Janus-faced quality of ceremony identified by van Gennep and Turner. Bertram had insisted that Helena must get the ring from his finger and be with child by him

to claim him as a husband. Diana reinvokes their former marriage vows in response to Bertram's protest that his vows of love are honest, and he will do her 'all rights of service'. She rebukes him 'Tis not the many oaths that makes the truth / But the plain single vow that is vowed true' (4.2.22-3), artfully reminding him that his empty wedding vows to Helena still need to be given substance, and that her own future promise to welcome him to her 'yet maiden bed' will not be the whole truth. Bertram enacts a second restorative betrothal (though without knowing the consequences) by giving his ring freely:

Here, take my ring

My house, mine honour, yea my life be thine

And I'll be bid by thee.

(4.2.52-4)

Having secured Bertram's ring, Diana vows that he will fully understand the significance of ring swapping only 'When back again this ring shall be delivered'. She promises

And on your finger in the night I'll put

Another ring, that what in time proceeds

May token to the future our past deeds.

(4.2.61-4)

Helena will give Bertram the ring that the King gave her. The distended ceremony thus re-marks the betrothal between them, inaugurated by Helena and enforced by the King, though this time in the correct order with Bertram having given his ring first. The night-time tryst described by Diana thus reorders and completes the peremptory process inaugurated by the King in Act 2 Scene 3:

Good fortune and the favour of the king

Smile upon this contract, whose ceremony

Shall seem expedient on the now-born brief

And be performed tonight. (2.3.175-7)

As we know, Bertram flees that night, refusing to consummate the marriage, so the final performance of the bedding ceremony, the ‘tonight’ staged by Helena and Diana, takes place much later. The unravelling of the plot, later still, is nearly thwarted by a second betrothal arranged by the King between Bertram and Lafeu’s daughter. Like the first, this is inaugurated hurriedly; the King fears that the ‘inaudible and noiseless foot of time’ may thwart even his ‘quick’st decrees’ since he is old (5.3.41-3). His confidence that ‘All is whole’ and that another royally-commanded betrothal ceremony can redeem the ‘consumèd time’ of Bertram’s past misdeeds, sounds absurd (5.2.38-9). The King’s drive to ‘take the instant by the forward top’ (5.2.90) or seize the moment of opportunity by the forelock, sounds like *kairos* but the play shows that it is *occasio* unsupported by the metaphysical authority needed to make this ‘right time’. *Kairos* is not simply an act of individual human will. The King functions as a living cautionary emblem, recalling Wither’s condemnation of the vanity and folly of those who ‘suppose / That men, at pleasure, might redeeme the Time’ (Wither 1635 cited in Baumlin 148-9).

The working of *kairos* is a more lengthy, collaborative process, involving ‘patient’ (5.3.222) suffering and restraint as well as self-assertion for all involved, especially Helena. Her process of Becoming imitates a scriptural model of *kairos*, in which Christ is said to come ‘*en kairo*, sometimes translated as “the fullness of time”’ (Smith 2002: 55). The fullness of time, when Bertram has his ring returned ‘back again’ in a public fulfilment of the bond, occurs much later than the bed trick. It must be months later, chronologically, since Helena’s pregnant body can ‘feel her young one kick’ (5.3.304). The final court scene repeats the past by staging an interrupted betrothal (to Lafeu’s daughter) and a broken marriage to Diana (speaking in Helena’s place). The former replays Bertram’s infidelity in giving his ring to Diana and the latter his perfidy to both Helena and Diana. Since this scene turns into a trial of Bertram, it is appropriate that ceremony’s legal status as well as its spiritual significance is recalled. When Lafeu and then the King recognise Helena’s ring,

offered by Bertram, the King recites the absent Helena's vow, telling Bertram that she 'called the saints to surety / That she would never put it from her finger / Unless she give it to yourself in bed' (5.3.109-11). The invocation of the saints in Helena's vow marks it as a holy reversal of Bertram's that he will "never" be her husband until she can get the ring and consummate the marriage. Diana's words then ritualistically rehearse the breaking of the wedding vows Bertram and Helena took offstage (2.3.265). She speaks for Helena, cautioning Bertram:

If you shall marry  
 You give away this hand, and that is mine  
 You give away heaven's vows, and those are mine,  
 You give away myself, which is known mine  
 For I by vow am so embodied yours  
 That she which marries you must marry me

(5.3.171-6)

These words are like Bertram's earlier vows and Diana's empty betrothal promise. They are not 'the plain single vow that is vowed true' (4.2.23) because Diana speaks as Helena's double. The vows will only be embodied and so true when Helena appears with child and wearing Bertram's ring. The ceremony of ring exchange in Acts 4 and 5 of *All's Well* thus 'tokens to the future our past deeds' prophesying and committing to fulfilment in the future while repeating ceremonies from the past. As this example shows, ceremonies are heightened moments outside the steady pace of chronological time. They are examples of *kairos* as 'a point in time filled with significance,' and, in Frank Kermode's words, 'charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end' (Kermode: 1967: 48) but also to its beginning.

The significance of ceremonies in relation to chronological time is seen more fully in Shakespeare's first tetralogy *Henry VI Parts I, II, and III* and *Richard III*. As history plays they stage both state and familial rites of passage: betrothal, mourning, religious worship, penitence and sovereignty. The nature of their composition, with the co-authored *Henry VI*

*Part I* probably following *Parts II* and *III*, already involves games with historical time. In the tetralogy the early Shakespeare explores ceremony's capacity to meld past, present, and future, something he was to return to in *Henry VIII*. As *English* history plays which dramatize a time of historical proximity for late Tudor spectators, the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* also prompt us to ask questions about ceremony's affective power. By briefly considering the ways in which the first tetralogy encourages spectators to experience the past in the present, we can appreciate, more fully, the significance of Richmond's final ceremonial speech in *Richard III* that concludes the wars of the roses.

From the rudely interrupted funeral of Henry V which opens *Henry VI Part I*, spectators are confronted with a series of broken ceremonies: Henry and Edward IV's non-betrothals to Margaret and to the Lady Bona unravel bonds of kinship and international alliance. Joan la Pucelle and Eleanor of Gloucester's failed rites of witchcraft, and the false "miracle" of Simpcox's healing at St Albans demonstrate a religious vacuum, in spite of Henry VI's personal piety. Richard of York's ceremonious occupation of the throne at Westminster in the opening scene of *3 Henry VI* shows that the kingdom, the power and the glory that should unite in God's deputy have been fractured by civil war. If Talbot's death drew tears from spectators (Nashe 1592: 25) lamenting the end of feudal heroism, how did they respond to Jack Cade's carnival kingdom whose parody of courtly rituals advertises the savagery of sovereignty?

Richard III recognizes the immediacy of these issues to late Tudor listeners in his famous opening words 'Now is the winter of our discontent' (1.1.1) He says 'now' 3 times in this speech, 3 times more when he interrupts Lady Anne's procession of mourning to advance his own suit, and, indeed, he speaks 27 of the 76 occurrences of 'now' in the play. Richard's god is *kairos* as *occasio*, the uniquely timely figure of Opportunity, which transforms the present into the exceptional (the same process enacted by a ceremony). Richard's performance of ceremonies in the 'now' of the theatrical present, whether between 'two Bishops aloft' (3.7.68); or as the spirit of family reconciliation (2.3.66-70); or on his knees as a forsaken lover, has the power to seduce off-stage spectators just as readily as characters like Lady Anne. In Act I Scene 2 his present passion interrupts the sedate

ceremony of eloquent mourning with violent affect. Offering her the dagger, ‘Nay, now, dispatch’ (1.2.167), Richard turns her reflections on the past to a future which is first in her hands and next in her command: ‘even with the word, / This hand, which for thy love did kill thy love / Shall for thy love kill a far truer love’ (1.2.175-7). Richard risks playing out the Petrarchan wooing ritual in a savagely material form in order to take control of the future away from Anne. The betrothal which follows extends his victory beyond the present moment of stage action:

Richard: Vouchsafe to wear this ring

Anne: To take is not to give

Richard: Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger

(1.2.189-91)

Richard’s ring traps Anne for the time to come. In Act 4 Scene 1 she recalls the encounter as the start of a miserable marriage which she knows will end in him murdering her (4.1.70-84).

By contrast, when Richard tries to make a second proposal in Act 4 Scene 4, it is Queen Elizabeth, taught by Margaret the ghostly historian of the play, who controls the time to come. This is a proxy wooing and betrothal ceremony where Elizabeth speaks for her daughter. It follows social convention since the widowed Elizabeth negotiates as the head of the family but, as with Diana speaking for Helena in *All’s Well*, the absence of the subject (Princess Elizabeth) means these cannot be the ‘plain single vow that is vowed true’ (*AWW* 4.2.22-3). Instead, Queen Elizabeth appropriates the language and style of ceremony using stichomythia and repeated vows just as Richard had done earlier, to show how Richard’s actions have made ceremony hollow. Her clever rhetoric marks the undoing of ceremony — and chronological time — which the civil wars and their misshapen offspring, Richard, have produced. Queen Elizabeth counters each of Richard’s protestations of future love for Princess Elizabeth with reminders of his grisly past. At the climax of the scene, she confounds his attempt to seize the present in ceremonial protestations of truth: he has ‘profaned’ and ‘pawned’ the honour and virtue associated

with Order of the Garter and St George; he has ‘disgraced’ the ‘kingly dignity’ of the crown; he has dishonoured the memory his father, misused the world, himself, and God, whose ‘wrong is most of all’ (4.4.285-95). Queen Elizabeth shows Richard that he no longer has the power to seize the present and make it exceptional. His defensive wish to swear ‘By the time to come’ violates the form of ceremony itself, which is enacted in the present. Elizabeth responds by upstaging his plans for a betrothal by conducting a micro-ceremony of mourning. Her ritualistic lines invoke and enact a metaphysical *kairos*, cutting across both the historical order and the opportunism embodied by Richard, with the effect of projecting the future into the past and denying him the right to swear by ‘the time to come’:

That thou hast wronged in time o’erpast,  
 For I myself have many tears to wash  
 Hereafter time, for time past wronged by thee.  
 The children live whose parents thou hast slaughtered —  
 Ungoverned youth to wail it in their age.  
 The parents live whose children thou hast butchered  
 — Old withered plants, to wail it with their age.  
 Swear not by time to come, for that thou hast  
 Misused ere used, by time misused o’erpast.

(4.4.306)

This ceremony of mourning reverses the pattern in Act I, Scene 2 where Richard transforms mourning to betrothal. Instead, Elizabeth assumes control of ‘the time to come’, by betrothing her daughter to Richmond not Richard, thus founding the Tudor dynasty that extended across time to her great-grand-daughter Elizabeth I. Furthermore, Queen Elizabeth’s lines arrest the chronology of performance because they articulate and give

shape to a communal grief beyond her immediate loss: that of her future pain, and the audiences own past experiences.

Philip Schwyzer has argued that the 1590s was ‘still thoroughly pervaded by traces and remnants of Ricardian time’, including ‘inherited memories’ of his reign from grandparents and great grandparents (Schwyzer 2013: 217). Elizabeth’s vision includes the memories of ancestors, the children ‘whose parents thou hast slaughtered’ and who ‘wail it in their age’. What makes the speech so powerful in its live moment of utterance is the technique of layering time: what Matthew Wagner calls a ‘marked constitution of past and future’, of beginning and end ‘not as they line up sequentially, but as they stack simultaneously’ (Wagner 2012: 66). Elizabeth’s words create a thickening of time and emotion that reaches across another boundary: that between the fictive play world occupied by the characters and actors, and towards the reservoir of emotions of loss and pain felt and feared by spectators in the theatre.

The play’s final speech, delivered by Richmond, picks up on the current of sympathy to invoke applause for the performance and for the collective Tudor values that have emerged victorious over Richard’s seductive individualism. Early anthropologists such as Emile Durkheim and Gabriel Tarde recognized that human values are infused with emotions and saw ceremony’s importance in creating and shaping those emotions and values. Tarde’s *La Logique Social* (1893) argues that ceremonial celebrations are the sovereign procedure through which the social fabric is organized, and Durkheim observes that ‘collective ceremonies... produce a state of effervescence among those who take part in them’ (Durkheim 1915: 399). Randall Collins uses Erving Goffman’s work on social interaction to develop a theory of how emotional energies, Durkheim’s idea of ‘collective effervescence’ functions through ritualistic activities. Interaction ritual is, Collins explains, ‘a theory of momentary encounters among human bodies charged up with emotions and

consciousness because they have gone through chains of previous encounters' (Collins 3). These anthropological ideas are useful for reading Richmond's speech: lines that summarize the collective experience of civil war - bodies and consciousnesses who have gone through chains of previous encounters with the wars of the roses, in their own lives and through watching parts or all of the tetralogy (5.5.15-41). The actor playing Richmond performs the closing ceremony of the play, whose culmination is not on Bosworth field but in the media space of the theatre itself.

Although Richmond does not, like Henry V, call explicitly for a *Te Deum* (song of praise to God), his concluding speech ceremonially ('as we have ta'en the sacrament' 5.5.18) offers a prayer for a marriage that will bring peace between the houses of York and Lancaster and to the whole kingdom. It is both a peace ceremony and a request for applause which cleverly replays the theatrical tradition of concluding a performance with a prayer to the monarch (Dutton 2018: 6). The prayer aligns Richmond's imminent sovereignty with that of God. Listeners on-stage and off are petitioned to support Richmond's rule with the word 'amen' and God is likewise petitioned to say 'Amen' to peace under Tudor rule. Indeed, Richmond insists 'What traitor hears me and says not "Amen"' (5.5.22). As a result, spectators of the history of Richard III are drawn into a national *communitas* to celebrate the myth of Tudor unity in which they are presently living. Who dares not say 'amen'?

Richmond's ceremony of peace is thus, at one level, a self-consciously political manoeuvre which advertises the transition from a national tragedy of civil war towards a happy future of Tudor prosperity. However resonant its affective power on late Tudor spectators, I suspect that the ceremony's 'theonomous' quality remains compromised because the play which proceeds it has so thoroughly evacuated belief in the truth of ceremony spoken in the performative present. This may have as much to do with genre as with Shakespeare's maturity in staging moments of ceremony because the christening in *All*

*Is True* does not constitute a fundamentally different *kairic* moment. It too understands *kairos* as grasping divinely ordained timeliness in response to chronological change.

My final section thus moves away from the dramatic manipulation of chronological time in the history plays to consider how ceremonies work more resonantly in the late tragicomedy *The Winter's Tale*. My reading departs from the theories of Heidigger, Husserl and Wagner who have thought about *kairos* as charged with exceptional meaning derived from its relation to 'end time', with reference to mortality and to the ending of the theatrical performance. As Frank Kermode explains in *The Sense of An Ending*, the Christian narrative changes the nature of *kairos*. While the Greek gods could not change the past, Christ did change it 'rewrote it, and in a new way fulfilled it' (Kermode 1967: 49) thereby creating a different 'thickness' to time. The incarnation can make God's time, eternity or *aion*, part of the present. Ceremonies, temporary, finite and radically particular moments, connect *chronos* and *aion* in what Paul Tillich calls 'theonomous' moments, through the actions of celebrants and witnesses. Tillich's theology finds an early modern equivalent in Quaker belief in the 'indwelling Christ', a doctrine of presence that brings together the biblical past, and the second-coming of Christ (the future), in the body and spirit of the believer in the present (Hinds 2011: 82-99). *The Winter's Tale* moves beyond history to extend the process of *All's Well That Ends Well* which shows 'a heavenly effect in an earthly actor' (*AWW* 2.2.25).

*The Winter's Tale* self-consciously dramatizes the constructed nature of its theonomous ceremonies, not to hollow out their significance but to advertise the incarnation of the divine in and through artistic, theatrical means. John E. Smith observes 'in the domain of art, *kairos* is the right measure of proposition directed by the aim of creating a unified, individual work' (Smith 58). As well as presenting a personification of Time to announce the passage of sixteen years, the text stacks up a range of narratives: ancient

Greek history, seasonal cycles, myth and miracle, in the present of performance.

Shakespeare's *Sicilia* uses elements of Greene's tragic prose romance *Pandosto, or the Triumphs of Time* and invokes the history of Dionysius I (432-367 BC), tyrannical ruler of Sicily, the most important of the Western Greek colonies of *magna Graecia*. It also draws on Theocritus's pastoral *Idylls*, which are firmly set in Sicily. Shakespeare would have known Dionysius I's story from the 'Life of Dion' in North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. By the time he wrote *The Winter's Tale*, a 'Life of Dionysius' had appeared in the expanded 1603 version of Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>2</sup> It offers a more detailed, but hitherto unnoticed authority for Shakespeare's play, opening with an epigraph that suggests a parallel with the dramatic life of Leontes:

*Base Tyranny is wrongs unhappy mother*

*Witnesse this wretch, in shew both grave and wise:*

*Yet he himselfe beguiling, and each other*

*Shew'd that his heart was fierce, and full of vice.*

(Plutarch 1603: 33)

In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes's irrational jealousy, which beguiles him, differs from Dionysius's more general fears of usurpation, yet Shakespeare's play does seem to draw a parallel life to that of the tyrant who is 'determined to have put his brother in law Polyxemus to death, but hee, having and inkling of it, fled out of SICILIA.' Dionysius is flattered by his courtiers but publicly reprimanded by his sister, Tescha, who, Paulina-like, 'answered him with a bold countenance' and calls him a 'tyrant' (Plutarch 1603: 47). In Plutarch's account Dionysius retires to his moated lodgings to 'shut himselfe in with great feare' (Plutarch 1603: 48). The first part of *The Winter's Tale* bears the weight of ancient history, staging a fall from the idealized, prelapsarian past which Polixenes and Leontes played as boys eternal, into the clock time of adult masculinity where months, weeks, days and hours are



taken from being to non-being: 'I was nothing'. The air feels 'delicate' and smells 'sweet'; the sight / site of the building invokes awe (3.1.1-3); the 'celestial habits' and reverent actions of the celebrants 'catches' the visitors, arresting the flow of everyday experience, so that they hear 'Jove's thunder' and sense the divine in the deafening sound of the unearthly oracle's voice, and the 'solemn and unearthly' accompaniment to the sacrifice. The *kairic* moment, full of meaning, has transported them from the present to the eternal. They have moved from *chronos* to *kairos* and glimpsed *aion*. Back in chronological time, Cleomenes and Dion hasten to summon 'Fresh horses' so that the 'rare' contents of the oracle 'will rush to knowledge' (3.1.20-21). Nevertheless, Dion tellingly observes that the 'event' of the journey has been 'rare, pleasant, speedy / The time is worth the use on 't' (3.1.11-14), probably referring as much to his own transformative experience as his hopes for Hermione. Frederick Sontag argues that, although temporal human beings cannot grasp non-temporal entities with the perfect control which God exercises, *kairic* moments make us 'aware of our temporality as contrasted to all that is possible but not actually in being,' so we may be released from temporality 'into the non-being of the infinite possible modes of being' (Sontag 1967: 293). This is what Cleomenes seems to have experienced when he confesses that the divine oracle's voice 'so surprised my sense / That I was nothing' (3.1.10-11).

Even though Leontes blasphemously dismisses the oracle to continue his tragic history, in dramatic terms the reported ceremony enacts a rite of passage, detaching the play from the chronological burden of ancient history and setting it adrift in a liminal space of fiction where supernatural figures like Flora, Proserpine, Neptune mix with the carnival sheep-shearing festival and the extraordinary appearance of Time. Critics have observed that the play's three phases move from ancient tragedy, to a pastoral 'intermezzo' (Lupton 1996: 177), and to romance or to 'something very close to

contemporary Christian' (Martz 1980) but have not remarked on how the tripartite structure plays out van Gennep and Turner's three phases of ritual practice: separation, liminality, and reincorporation. In the 'liminal' sheep-shearing ceremony, fragments of Greek romance and myth mix with English ballads and a pastoral tradition originating in the *Idylls* of Theocritus. The *Idylls*, like the sheep-shearing scene, combine references to the local habitation and to the wider divine panopticon, including Jupiter, Minerva, and 'thou Proserpina, who with thy mother, hast renowne'. With the help of such gods, idyllic pastoral peace and prosperity can return to Sicily 'and sheepe upon the downes maie blete / By thousandes infinite, and fat' (Theocritus 1588: A6).<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's own temporal juggling in the liminal space of Bohemia is self-consciously advertised by the sudden appearance of Time, whose power to 'o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour / To plant and o'erwhelm custom' (4. I .8-9) offers the fluid concept of time most famously articulated by Heraclitus in his image of Time playing with pieces on a board game (Allen 69). Shakespeare and his spectators would have been aware of the 'wide gap' or contradictions between *chronos* (χρόνος), sequential time, and *kairos* (καιρός) and *aion* (αἰών) or eternity, that went back to ancient Greece where 'time was not inexorable, regular or fully predictable' (Allen 72). As Scott Maisano has observed, Time in *The Winter's Tale* 'repeats the word "now"' more often any other speech in Shakespeare. Time 'is the onstage action' and the now of performance 'serves as a continuously moving boundary between past and future' without limitation since 'it has no extension or duration in time' beyond the present moment of dramatic action or enunciation (Maisano 2013: 380, 374-5).

Following the liminal interlude of the sheepshearing ceremony, in which gods, humans and time are thrown into flux, and ancient deities with power over life and death are remembered, the characters and spectators are reincorporated into Sicilia, where the theurgic

(god-working) power of myth reanimates the statue of Hermione. William E. Engel's reading of *The Winter's Tale* as a memory theatre argues that 'The Art of Memory was among the principle ways that myth, linked to the release and working of theurgic power was mobilised' by Shakespeare in order to create drama that moved beyond the unities of time, place and action outlined by Aristotle (Engel 2013: 72). When Paulina commands 'Tis time' (5.3.100) the 'magic' stage-managed ceremony constitutes a *kairic* moment of liminality where time (*chronos*) touches eternity (*aion*). This enacted ceremony works differently from that reported by Cleomenes and Dion where witnesses are 'transported' beyond the flow of sequential events to apprehend a divine simultaneity 'outside' time. I propose that that rather than translating humanity to nonbeing as Apollo's oracle does to Cleomenes and Dion, Paulina's ceremony functions more like a prototype for the Quaker idea of embodied simultaneity: it looks back to the past and enacts a second coming in the present that is human and divine.<sup>4</sup>

As a theatrical spectacle, the ceremony also reincorporates the sacred into the theatre. It is an instance of what Paul Tillich calls a 'theology of culture' in which a work of art is a result of a 'creating ecstasy' and can be 'religiously expressive' (Tillich 1959: 48). Paulina's ceremony picks up what Cleomenes and Dion could only report, however eloquently, and presents it as live action to all. The First Gentleman invites actors, characters and theatregoers to participate when he urges 'Who would be thence that has the benefit of access? Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born. Our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge' (5.2.102-5). The chapel setting constitutes those who witness and enact the ceremony in communion as well in *communitas*. The theatrical conditions of a performance in the Blackfriars theatre would have enhanced the *kairic* qualities as Muriel Cunin has observed: 'Leontes and his party are like playgoers crossing the liminal spaces' of the Blackfriars theatre, a former Dominican priory, 'before reaching the room where the

performance is to take place' (Cunin 141). Like the celebrants at Apollo's shrine or the former monastic celebrants in Blackfriars, Paulina makes use of multi-sensory appeal in carefully stage-managing the elements of visual spectacle, music, movement, smell and touch in her ceremony of resurrection. The inner room for a 'private' performance at Blackfriars would have been lit with candles, recalling the religious ceremonies that formerly took place there. Paulina invokes 'wonder' at the artistic skill followed by 'marvel' at the 'living' Hermione (5.3.22, 100, 116). Whether those present witness this as a miracle of resurrection or as a restoration of a living body is deliberately ambiguous, but if the 'creating ecstasy' that produces a work of art can be 'religiously expressive', then the question is irrelevant. Paulina points out all that is needed to make a miracle happen: 'It is required / You do awake your faith' (5.3.94-5). Perdita kneels in the chapel to ask a 'blessing' of the statue in Marian tradition, only to find that the icon is filled with the spirit of life, so she kneels again to 'pray for your mother's blessing' (5.3.120). Paulina's artistry extends and deepens the theonomous effect of embodied presence that Shakespeare had explored in earlier comedies like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *All's Well That Ends Well*.

What new knowledge and self-knowledge does this ceremony offer to on and off-stage participants? For Leontes the ceremony functions as a confession and spiritual rebirth. He experiences 'my evils conjured in remembrance' when he beholds 'magic in the majesty' of the statue (5.3.40) and, as with the statue, he is silent until the revived Hermione touches him and reanimates his flesh. For Hermione and, to a lesser extent, Polixenes, the ceremony is a ritual of forgiveness.<sup>5</sup> For Hermione and Perdita it enacts restoration, one which inspires Hermione to ask the gods to look down 'And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head' invoking the ceremony of baptism which is enacted in the present and for all time, and thus making time touch eternity. Just because these interactional rituals are celebrated by human participants and

across temporal generations, does not mean they cannot transcend sequential time. Even more so than Gloucester's 'fall' from Dover Cliff, Hermione's resurrection proves, for everyone in the theatre, 'thy life's a miracle' (*KL F.4.5.57*).

Nevertheless, the indwelling light or immortality revealed in moments of *kairos* runs simultaneously with *chronos*. Hermione, like Cleopatra, is 'wrinkled deep in time' (*AC 1.5.29*). Mamillius, like Shakespeare's son Hamnet, and Paulina's husband Antigonus are 'never to be found again' (5.3.133). The ceremony has temporarily detached characters from sequential time even while they remember it. Leontes and Perdita both protest that they could 'stand by, a looker on' within the chapel for twenty years (5.3.83-4). Paulina, presumably speaking for Shakespeare himself, preserves the sacred moment of ceremony for as long as possible, postponing Hermione's desire to hear Perdita's history with an abrupt 'There's time enough for that' (5.3.129). The separate time given to those on and off stage must be protected 'Lest they desire upon this push to trouble / Your joys with like relation' (5.3.128-9). The sacred suspension of *chronos* offered by ceremony in the chapel and in the theatre must be savoured because, although Leontes does request a 'leisurely' account by everyone of what they have 'Performed in this wide gap of time', his final direction to all in the theatre is 'Hastily, lead away' (5.3.152-5). In Paulina's ceremony, Shakespeare the writer foregrounds the very human but magical context of live theatre and its value; he demonstrates its power as a ritual process through which social hierarchies can be dissolved, personal identities can be renewed, and where the transformative energies it generates can make time come round in redemptive ways.

### References

Allen, Danielle S. 'The Flux of Time in Ancient Greece.' *Daedalus* 132:2 (2003): 62-73.

Baumlin, James S. 'Ciceronian Decorum and the Temporalities of Renaissance Rhetoric.' *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis*, edited by Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 138-164.

Bradshaw, Thomas, *The Sheperds Starre* (London, 1591)

Collins, Randall. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Diehl, Huston, "'Does not the stone rebuke me?": the Pauline Rebuke and Paulina's Lawful Magic in *The Winter's Tale*.' *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, edited by Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 69-82.

Dutton, Richard. *Shakespeare's Theatre: A History*. Wiley Blackwell, 2018.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Joseph Ward Swain London: G Allen & Unwin (1915)

Engel, William E. 'Kinetic emblems and memory images in *The Winter's Tale*.' *Late Shakespeare 1608-1613*, edited by Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane. Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 71-87.

Hinds, Hilary. *George Fox and Early Quaker Culture*. Manchester University Press, 2011.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of An Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 1967.

Lupton, Julia Reinhard, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature*. Stanford University Press, 1996.

'Judging Forgiveness: Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden and *The Winter's Tale*,' *New Literary History*, 45:4 (2014), 614-63

Maisano, Scott. 'Now'. *Early Modern Theatricality*, edited by Henry S. Turner. Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 368-85.

Martz, Louis. Shakespeare's Humanist Enterprise: *The Winter's Tale*. *English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in honour of her Seventieth Birthday*, edited by John Carey. Oxford University Press, 1980.

Miller, Carolyn E. 'Forward'. *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis*, edited by Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. xi-xiv.

Nashe, Thomas, *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell*. London, 1592.

Nuttall, A. D. 'Action at a Distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks'. *Shakespeare and the Classics*, edited by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor. Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 209-24.

Schwzyzer, Philip, *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Sir Thomas North. London, 1603.

Sipiora, Phillip, 'Kairos: The Rhetoric of Time and Timing and the New Testament'. *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis*, edited by Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 114-27.

Smith, John E. 'Time and Qualitative Time'. *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis*, edited by Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 46-57.

Sontag, Frederick. 'Heidigger, Time and God'. *Journal of Religion* 47:4 (1967): 279-94.

Stahl, Devan. 'In Defence of Paul Tillich: Toward a Liberal Protestant Bioethics,' *Christian Bioethics*, 20(2), 260–271, 2014

Tarde, Gabriel, *La Logique Sociale, Deuxieme Partie* (Paris: Félix Alcan 1893)

[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/tarde\\_gabriel/la\\_logique\\_sociale/la\\_logique\\_sociale.htm](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/tarde_gabriel/la_logique_sociale/la_logique_sociale.htm)

1 [last accessed 16/02/2018]

Tillich, Paul. *The Protestant Era*. University of Chicago Press, 1957.

*Theology of Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1959.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* [1969]. Transaction, 2008.

Wagner, Matthew D. *Shakespeare, Theatre and Time*. Routledge, 2012.

---

Notes

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Rebecca Bushnell, Matthew Wagner and the two anonymous readers whose comments have helped me to improve this article.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Life of Dionysius' appears on pp. 33-50 of the 'liues newly added' at the end of the book.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bradshaw's *The Sheperds Starre* (London, 1591) also offers "A Paraphrase upon the third of the Canticles of Theocritus" (B1ff). but makes no reference to Sicilia.

<sup>4</sup> On this see Huston Diehl's wonderful essay "'Does not the stone rebuke me? The Pauline Rebuke and Paulina's Lawful Magic in *The Winter's Tale*.'" *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, edited by Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 69-82.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Judging Forgiveness: Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden and *The Winter's Tale*,' *New Literary History*, 45:4 (2014), 614-63. astutely analyses how Jewish and Christian forms of forgiveness dramatized here.