Performing the Sea: Fortune, Risk, and Audience Engagement in *Pericles*

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Gentle breath of yours my sails / Must fill, or else my project fails.
—*The Tempest*, Epilogue, 11–12[1]

After wielding the power to command storm and shipwreck throughout *The Tempest*, Prospero speaks an Epilogue in which he acknowledges how his manipulation of the sea has always been subject to the indulgence of the audience. In comparing the audience's compliance to favorable sea winds, Prospero's speech plays upon a familiar association between theatrical performance and seafaring in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Prologue to Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* (1611) wonders "How is't possible to please / Opinion tos'd in such wilde Seas?" given the sheer numbers of people who attend the theater and the diversity of their tastes.[2] As Douglas Bruster has argued, *The Tempest*'s opening shipwreck can itself be read as an allegory for playhouse labor, since theatrical productions, like seafaring, required hard work and cooperation.[3] Unwilling audiences interfered with this labor by disrupting the performance or its representational fictions, rather than helping to keep the ship afloat. Theater and seafaring also shared a precarious status as risky enterprises undergoing new forms of commercialization in early modern England. For early modern playwrights, the risks, dangers, and

1. *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997), Epilogue, 11–12.

2. *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, ed. John Jowett, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Prologue, 9–10.

3. Bruster specifically identifies the confusion of authority prompted by the shipwreck with the conditions of the Blackfriars Theatre, where audience members seated on the stage threatened to interfere with the labor of the actors. See Douglas Bruster, "Local *Tempest*: Shakespeare and the World of the Early Modern Playhouse," in *The Tempest: Critical Essays*, ed. Patrick Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2001), 257–75.

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unpredictability of the sea offered an apt metaphor for the unprecedented practice of presenting theatrical entertainment as a commodity for paying audiences. The commercial theater's transformation of playgoers into discriminating customers offers a crucial context for understanding Prospero's anxious appeal to his audience and his acknowledgment that without their approval his "project fails."

Based on such sentiments, one might be tempted to conclude that playwrights and actors understood themselves to be completely at the mercy of their audiences. In the same moment, antitheatricalists of the period took an opposing view of the theater's affinities with seafaring, highlighting the dangers that the theater posed to playgoers, who risked being swept away by the illusions of the stage and its questionable morals. Stephen Gosson peppered his writings with maritime metaphors that likened a playgoer's exposure to risk in the theater to a ship leaving the safety of the harbor for the open sea. As Kent Lehnhof has shown, Gosson's antitheatrical writings adopted a "resolutely antinautical" stance by associating both theatergoing and seafaring with "recklessness," "folly," and "licentiousness" and by suggesting that "those who entrust themselves to the seas are sure to be lost, either blown off course or drowned in the depths."[4] Such attitudes understood theatrical spectatorship to be a mindless form of viewing and regarded the stage as a place of untrustworthy and misleading appearances. These beliefs contributed to what Amy Rodgers has described as the construction of an early modern "discursive spectator," which functions as the "repository of a culture's ideas and anxiety about viewing and interpretive practices."[5] While not to be equated with actual audience practices, these ideas played a powerful role in shaping polemical debates about the theater and influencing the ways that plays and playwrights oriented themselves to their audiences. If early modern playwrights felt themselves to be dangerously imperiled by the whims of demanding audiences, antitheatricalists imagined audiences to be helplessly transported by the powerful sway of theatrical performance. And yet both perspectives rely on the metaphor of seafaring to express highly disempowering positions for either play or playgoer.

But what if seafaring offered a model for success rather than for failure? By turning to the history of English economic expansion and its conjuncture with new philosophies of luck, chance, and risk, this essay draws attention to the more positive dimensions of the theatrical-maritime analogy and reveals its potential to model an interactive relationship between audience and play that is mutually

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4. Kent Lehnhof, "Ships That Do Not Sail: Antinauticalism, Antitheatricalism, and Irrationality in Stephen Gosson," *Renaissance Drama* 42, no. 1 (2014): 91–111, 94, 95.

5. Amy Rodgers, *A Monster with a Thousand Hands: The Discursive Spectator in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 4.

enriching and empowering. Such a view emphasizes theater and seafaring to be not just dangerous, risky, and debasing enterprises but rather enjoyable, edifying, and uplifting ones. As I demonstrate below, positive interpretations of seafaring as a metaphor for theatrical performance understood both enterprises to be linked not simply by essential riskiness and unpredictability but rather by a new understanding of fortune, which was undergoing an evolution in meaning in early modern England under the influences of proto-capitalist development. While largely deprecated as a sinful, earthly distraction in the Boethian tradition of the Middle Ages, fortune reemerged in the late sixteenth century as a conduit for opportunistic but also productive and virtuous action. Partly cultivated by the emergence of new commercial enterprises, including English global trade and the development of the professional for-profit theater, fortune encapsulated the role of luck and chance in guiding these ventures. But it also signified the opening of new opportunities for successful navigation and the fulfillment of human ambitions that could be considered consonant with God's providence. By adopting this new and enabling understanding of fortune as a guiding principle for seafaring and theater, early moderns began to understand these ventures as empowering judicious human agency and as offering the potential for unforeseen and bounteous rewards. Critics of Renaissance drama have tended to downplay such an idealized perspective in their concern to capture the anxieties attendant upon theatrical commercialization, but in doing so they have perhaps oversimplified the ways that playwrights embraced the metaphor of seafaring to theorize an ideal relationship between audience and play and to advance a positive view of the effects of commercialization. Approaching the seafaring metaphor as a model for theatrical success, furthermore, yields insight into audience's role not just as passive but as active participants in the making of performance. In this way we recover an interactive relationship between plays and their audiences, one in which audiences retain their own agency as discerning viewing subjects who decide when to detach or to give over to the sway of performance, and playwrights, for their part, retain agency in helping to guide their audiences through these interactions by entraining and rewarding certain viewing practices. Finally, a fortune-driven view of the maritime-theatrical analogy illuminates the potential for theatrical commerce to play a virtuous role in cultivating audiences who were discriminating customers and producing commodities that granted pleasure to their audiences while simultaneously edifying and uplifting them.

To offer a particularly compelling example of how the early modern theater embraced its affinities with a fortune-driven view of seafaring, I turn in what follows to Shakespeare and Wilkins's *Pericles* (1608), a play that mobilizes a sea-tossed protagonist to model a lesson about fortune and simultaneously cultivate a certain form of audience engagement. Unlike *The Tempest*, *Pericles* is episodic in structure and flagrantly disregards the Aristotelian unities. In compelling its

audience to follow its protagonist from place to place without knowing what lies ahead, the play actively importunes its audience to sustain a willing engagement characterized by patience and trust. Fittingly, *Pericles* pursues this objective through its distinct dramaturgical strategies for representing the sea, a seemingly impossible task on stage. Rather than attempt to mimetically represent the sea, the play depicts the action of sea travel, storms, and shipwrecks through the choral narration of an actor playing John Gower, the fourteenth-century author of one of the play's chief sources. In doing so, the play exposes the performative and representational mechanics behind the stage's conjuration of the sea and foregrounds the audience's interactive role in producing and navigating the effects of theatrical performance. As *Pericles* clearly demonstrates, the protagonist's traversal of the sea relies upon the audience's cognitive and embodied responses, which are directly solicited by Gower in the form of patience, attention, and imagination. By elucidating the particular challenges that the play poses to audiences through its representation of seafaring, I demonstrate how *Pericles* offers a meditation and an experiential exposition on the risks and potential pleasures of performance unique to the newly commercialized public theater. In addition, I show how the play employs a thematic concern with the nature of fortune (both metaphysical and economic), which it construes through the dangers of early modern sea venturing, to characterize the unpredictable nature of commercial performance and also to contemplate the agency that lies behind its potential success or failure.

SEAFARING, FORTUNE, AND THE AUDIENCE'S FAVOR

The theater's use of the metaphor of seafaring to characterize performance seizes upon the unpredictability of oceanic travel, cultivated by a long-standing cultural association of the sea with the whims of fortune. The trope of the supreme yet arbitrary sea was centrally employed as a narrative device in the genres of romance and epic to structure the hero's journey, and thus its roots go back to classical and medieval traditions. Suparna Roychoudhury sheds light on a broad discursive history in which the swirling sea signifies mental perturbation and affective distress.[6] More expansively, Hans Blumenberg's *Shipwreck with Spectator* offers a philosophical history of the seafaring metaphor, tracing its multiple, interrelated actualizations from Lucretius through the Enlightenment.[7] Intriguingly, if Blumenberg locates a shift between "the ancient suspicion that underlies the metaphorics

6. Suparna Roychoudhury, "Mental Tempests, Seas of Trouble: The Perturbations of Shakespeare's *Pericles*," *ELH* 82, no. 4 (2015): 1013–39.

7. Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

of shipwreck" and the Enlightenment view that "shipwreck is the price that must be paid" for progress and reason, he understands the nature of the sea—its turbulence and risks—to be historically stable.[8] However, as Steve Mentz and Dan Brayton have shown, the early modern period witnessed a profound shift in the perceived significance of the ocean's dangers, largely due to the expansion of trade and transoceanic shipping.[9] As has now been well documented, England underwent a large-scale economic transformation beginning in the mid–sixteenth century as it belatedly joined a long-established global network of trade centered in the Mediterranean.[10] England's increasing economic reliance on overseas commerce spawned a new awareness of the ocean's massive scale and power. The uncertainty of the fluctuating sea offered both a metaphor and a literal explanation for the vicissitudes of early English commercial and colonial expansion. Journeys were long and arduous, and the chances of getting lost, thrown off course, or shipwrecked were high. In addition, seafarers confronted the risks of disease, starvation, conflict over victuals, mutiny, and threats of piracy, plunder, and captivity. In turn, the London theater capitalized upon the dramatic potential of sea travel in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Old Fortunatus* (1600), *The Fair Maid of the West* (1600), *Fortune by Land and Sea* (1607), *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607), and of course *Pericles*. The storms that play such pivotal roles in the plots of *Pericles* and *The Tempest*, as well as in *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*, held a topical relevance for the English because of the prevalence of contemporary reports of shipwrecks and other seaborne accidents.

Responding to reignited interests in the force of the sea across English literature more broadly, Mentz's methodology for a "blue cultural studies" posits the agency of the ocean, a medium of "chaos" and "pure alterity," and in turn decenters the subjecthood of humans and their "orderly" land-based habitat.[11] His maritime reorientation reminds us of a worldview in which humans did not presume

8. Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 10, 29.

9. Mentz views the ocean as a site of hostility and chaos, whereas Brayton sees it as a source of transformation, mutability, and redemption. See Steve Mentz, "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature," *Literature Compass* 6, no. 5 (2009): 997–1013, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009), and *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization 1550–1719* (2015); and Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

10. See, e.g., Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (London: Verso, 2003). For a useful overview of England's entry into the world system and its impact on English economic practices, see Daniel Vitkus, "The Common Market of All the World: English Theater, the Global System, and the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period," in *Global Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550–1700*, ed. Stephen Deng and Barbara Sebek (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 22–37.

11. Mentz, "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies," 1001.

themselves to be dominant over nature and helps us to better appreciate the pervasive role that oceanic settings and tropes play in early modern literature. At the same time, the economic developments that helped to shift early modern conceptions of the ocean, and that I argue crucially informed the stage's interest in sea travel, foregrounded a relationship between humans and sea that depended upon successful navigation and human initiative. English advancements in maritime technology—including navigational and cartographical improvements, as well as a more informed knowledge of the earth's geography—were part of a new humanistic enterprise led by John Dee, Walter Raleigh, and others to know and navigate the world. These enterprises valued knowledge not for its own sake but for its potential financial payoffs. The uncontainable agency of the ocean loomed large precisely because economic expansion demanded that humans contend with it.

Evolving understandings of fortune are reflected in English emblem books that conflate the iconographical figure of Fortune with that of Occasio, signifying postitive opportunity. Geffrey Whitney's 1586 *Choice of Emblems* relocates Fortuna's wheel from the land-based orientation of its medieval context to the open sea, where it serves as flotation device for a naked figure that symbolizes both fortune and occasion (fig. 1). George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635) features a similar figure holding a sail like the mast of a ship, accompanied by the motto "Vncertaine, Fortunes Favors, bee, And, as the Moone, so changeth Shee" (fig. 2). While this motto may seem to harken back to Boethius' warnings about the dangers of being seduced and betrayed by Fortune's inconstancy, the conflated figure of Fortune and Occasio more typically conveyed the notion of a beneficial opportunity that should not be allowed to pass. Her naked body and long forelock solicit human engagement and call out to be seized. The idea that embracing such opportunity is both morally imperative and pressured by time is signaled through the figure's bald head, for if she passes by you cannot grasp her from behind because her head is too slippery. Such an understanding shared something in common with Machiavelli's conception of a fortune-driven world that could be conquered or advantageously navigated through *virtù*, or masculine human prowess. However, whereas Machiavelli advocated the use of violence to subdue fortune at the expense of moral considerations, the understanding of fortune that developed in relation to early modern seafaring invites actions and consequences that might be considered virtuous, in effect marrying *virtù* with virtue. If the changing iconography of fortune seemed to promote well-timed decisive action, it also encouraged a stance of patient waiting and the biding of one's time. Such a stance was not so much equivalent to one of passivity or stoicism but rather to active engagement. Within this context, fortune represented not just a force of adversity but also one of opportunity, which could be applied to individualistic pursuits but which could also be used to characterize larger corporate, national, and even imperial initiatives. In addition, this new discourse of fortune became fused with a moral and even religious purpose in early modern

Figure 1. Geffrey Whitney, *Choice of Emblems* (1586)

England, in which the human pursuit of economic fortune was perceived to be honorable and fructifying.

If opportunistic responses to the challenges of sea travel contributed to what was becoming a more interactive and empowering orientation to fortune, they also helped to produce a new understanding of economic "fortune" earned through risky investment. Economic risk was of course directly linked to the material and bodily losses of sea travel, but it was also associated with the new economic model of venture capitalism that was introduced to the English through overseas trade.[12]

12. Because the importation of foreign goods depended heavily upon the expenditure of English coin or bullion, overseas trade threatened to drain English bullion with no guarantee of return. Proponents of "free trade" argued that foreign investment would be returned in the form of profit that exceeded the initial investment, creating a surplus of value, whereas detractors focused on the risk of loss and on the debasement of English bullion engendered through the effects of circulation and unstable rates of exchange. Economic debates about overseas investment came to a head during the depression of the 1620s through a series of pamphlets by Thomas Mun, Edward Misselden, and Gerard Malynes; however, these debates had begun to stir decades earlier. For earlier responses

Figure 2. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635). A color version of this figure is available online.

Such a model promoted long-term investment that required patience to wait out initial losses and well-timed action to eventually recuperate large gains. Valerie Forman has influentially argued that the newly emergent genre of tragicomedy offered a model for managing the risk of overseas investment by showing initial loss to lead to unexpected gain.[13] By aligning comic redemption with economic profit,

(predating *Pericles*), see Sir Thomas Smith, *A Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England* (written 1549, published 1581), which addresses fluctuating currency values; and Gerard Malynes, *The Canker of England's Commonwealth* (1601), which argues for fixed exchange rates and centralized monarchial regulation.

13. Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

tragicomedy rendered profit morally virtuous and modeled a reassuring return on overseas investment for English audiences. By contrast, Jonathan Gil Harris has argued that the stage expressed ambivalence about the risks of global commerce by merging economic discourse with metaphors of disease characterized by invasion, drainage, and imbalance.[14] In foregrounding the unpredictable turnings of fortune and its generation of new opportunities, I bring to the forefront another influential discourse that was employed by the stage to address the risks associated with global commerce. The etymological expansion of "fortune" right around the turn of the seventeenth century to denote not just metaphysical chance or luck but also "a position determined by wealth," coterminous with the phrase "to make a fortune," illustrates how economic gain and loss were becoming associated with the elusive mechanism of cosmic fortune.[15] Fortune denoted the unpredictable fluctuations induced by high-risk conditions, such as those associated with overseas investment and unregulated "free trade." It also signaled a scope of new opportunity for human agency, often held in tension with inexplicable rewards or punishments, created by these conditions. While the mysterious source of fortune's fluctuations and reversals may have eluded human comprehension or control, it did not foreclose successful human engagement.

Closely intertwined with the early modern discourse of fortune was a related and sometimes competing discourse of divine providence, which sought to explain away fortune's incomprehensible arbitrariness by attributing it to God's will. Though for Calvin, everything perceived as fortune was actually directly attributable to divine providence, for many members of the English laity, fortune and providence coexisted in a slippery and unstable relationship. Brian Cumming's reading of "luck" in *Hamlet* argues for a certain equivalence between luck and providentialism, the difference being a matter of interpretation: "one man's chance is another man's providence."[16] Somewhat similarly, Michael Witmore's study of the cultural significance of early modern accidents asserts that "Providentialism did not wipe out accidents; rather, it fostered a culture-wide enterprise of narrating these unexpected events with an eye toward their intrinsic drama and providential meaning."[17] In time, and with patience, faith, and appropriate action, in other words, fortune could *become* providence. The ability to successfully navigate the relationship between fortune and providence was thus a matter of

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14. Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

15. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "fortune," n., 6.

16. Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

17. Michael Witmore, *Culture of Accidents: Unexpected Knowledges in Early Modern England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 7.

proper orientation, as well as of interpretation and discernment. For those attempting to make sense of the accidents and failures of English expansionism, the idea that fortune might in time prove provident offered a source of immense comfort. Further, the idea that one might contribute to a providential outcome by remaining patiently engaged and judiciously embracing the opportunities of fortune offered an interactive role for human agency.

In turning to the newly apprehended risks of maritime travel and investment to characterize the risks of theatrical performance, the stage appropriated the discourse of fortune and its dynamic relationship to providence to contemplate its own economic risks. In certain basic respects, the financial risks of the commercial theater resembled those of sea venturing. Just as global trade introduced a new economic model, the emergence of the commercial theater occasioned radically new economic practices. At a time prior to financial institutionalism, theatrical entrepreneurialism and overseas speculation offered similarly high-risk opportunities for business people to invest their cash surpluses.[18] The naming of the Fortune Theater, a large public amphitheater built in 1600, demonstrates as clearly as we could wish the complex contingencies and unpredictability of theatrical investment. Success depended on the ability to discern and answer consumer demand, and yet there was no certain way to reliably anticipate this demand. In the metaphorical seafaring of the public theater, the audience assumed the role of fickle fortune. At the same time, theatrical practitioners appealed to the audience as a potential source of benevolent providence, a position bolstered by their surrounding presence in the theater and their interactive relationship with the performance. The Prologue to Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (ca. 1610) envisages the audience presiding over the play like fair weather over the sea, while also likening the audience's "helping hands" to the "hand" of providence: "Our ship's afloat; we fear nor rocks nor sands, / Knowing we are environed with your helping hands."[19] As my discussion of *Pericles* aims to demonstrate, theatrical practitioners could choose to reconcile these divergent views of the audience as unpredictable and providential by embracing an interactive relationship with theatergoers and actively cultivating certain viewing practices that supported their

18. As Rebecca Rogers and Kathleen McLuskie have demonstrated, the establishment of purpose-built playhouses significantly increased the number and influence of investors who were otherwise disconnected from the theater business. Unlike theater financiers who earned their money from interest-based loans, these investors bought housekeeping shares in a theater that tied their profits to the theater's success or failure; see "Who Invested in the Early-Modern Theatre?," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 41 (2001): 29–61. See also Lucy Munro, "'As It Was Played in the Blackfriars': Jonson, Marston, and the Business of Playmaking," *English Literary Renaissance* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 256–95. This article offers detailed insight into the investment structure of the Blackfriars playhouse around 1605, which involved many outside investors.

19. Robert Daborne, *A Christian Turned Turk* in *Three Turk Plays*, ed. Daniel Vitkus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), Prologue, 23–24.

objectives and understanding of theatrical value. What is sometimes chalked up by modern critics as *Pericles*'s clunkiness or representational failures can be seen as strategies that address the challenges of the newly commercialized theater by teaching audiences how to read theatrical performance. We can come to understand *Pericles*'s unique dramaturgical choices by perceiving how they lay bare the role of audience participation and also attempt to cultivate a viewing practice characterized by long-term investment and "patience," as well as "attention," "imagination," and "supposing," all key terms of Gower's that invoke the audience's active participation in sustaining the performance.

THE FORTUNES OF SEAFARING IN *PERICLES*

One of the chief ways that *Pericles* fosters patient viewing practices is through its thematic dramatization of the lessons of fortune, which are directly associated with the agency of the sea and reinforced by the play's visual and aural methods for representing sea travel. Flowing through each of the play's episodes, the sea is directly responsible for driving the fortunes of the play's protagonists, and showing their movements and destinies to be outside of their own control. Pericles's marriage to Thaisa, Marina's birth, the family's separation, Thaisa's landing in Ephesus, Marina's abduction by pirates and landing in Mytilene, Pericles's landing in Mytilene, and the family's eventual reunion are all directly facilitated by the mobility of the sea. And in each of these eventualities, the play explicitly identifies the sea with the force of fortune. "Fortune" (or "misfortune") is referenced by name twenty-one times in the play (compared with five times in *The Tempest*, a land-based drama), reflecting its explicit and pervasive authority in *Pericles*. For example, in describing how Pericles's inability to control his course at sea lands him at Pentapolis, Gower explains how

> . . . he, good prince, having all lost,
> By waves from coast to coast is tossed.
> All perishen of man, of pelf,
> Ne aught escapend but himself;
> Till Fortune, tired with doing bad,
> Threw him ashore to give him glad.[20]
>
> (2.0.33–38)

Here, "Fortune" personifies the sea, whose apparent moods or whims lead to the loss of Pericles's ship and entire crew, sparing only his life and randomly throwing

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20. *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004). Subsequent quotations from *Pericles* follow this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

him onto the shore of Pentapolis. It is as though Fortune employs the sea as her own personal stage and medium. The image of Pericles being "tossed" between coasts by the waves emphasizes his lack of agency, an effect reinforced by Gower's archaisms; in the midst of the sea, he is not a character who acts but rather one who is acted upon. Death and life, "perishen" and "escapend," his own or those of his crew, are emphatically not in Pericles's control but under the command of the sea and/as Fortune.[21]

The sea's undoing of Pericles's noble status underscores fortune's unassailable power, likening the agency of the sea to the arbitrary turning of fortune's wheel, which ensures that the ascendant position of a prince can only be temporary. Washed onto shore, Pericles rails against the "angry stars of heaven," agents of fate commonly associated with cosmic fortune, who command "wind, rain and thunder," for seeming not to recognize the helplessness of "earthly man," who is "but a substance that must yield to you" (2.1.1–3). Thus, his railing suggests not an act of defiance that empowers him but rather an acknowledgment of the stars' indifference to "earthly man's" fundamental lack of agency and vulnerability to their determinations. Pericles's helplessness illustrates the leveling effects of fortune, which reduce all humans to the same mortal condition, and reveal degrees of earthly status to be superficial contingencies that are easily lost. Entering the scene "naked," he is literally stripped of the clothing that identifies his princely status; he then laments the reversal of his fortune, as one that "never used to beg," who is now beholden to the "pity" of fisherman (2.1.60–61). Evocative of Boethius's warnings against placing faith in the whims of fortune, Pericles's undoing compels him to comprehend the impermanence of his earthly status. Apprehending his diminishment, he describes himself as a prince "bereft . . . of all his fortunes" (2.1.9), "whom both the waters and the wind / In that vast tennis court hath made the ball / For them to play upon" (2.1.58–60). Pericles's comparison of himself to a tennis ball employs a common metaphor for fortune that emphasizes its motivation as a form of "play," or recreational sport, as opposed to serious purpose.[22] And yet, fortune's effects on him are momentous: they involve a complete undoing of his noble identity.

While Pericles's undoing may seem arbitrary, the continual turn of his fortunes gradually hints at a larger plan or cosmic order at work. For reasons initially illegible to him, Pericles is spared the death of his other shipmates. Then, soon after his landing on Pentapolis, the sea inexplicably belches up his dead father's suit of armor, providing an outfit that will allow him to earn back his noble status. To this remarkable development, he responds, "Thanks, Fortune, yet, that after all

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21. My thanks to Marissa Greenberg for her help in developing these ideas.

22. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "play" II.6.a. See Gossett, *Pericles*, 229, for a gloss on other contemporary uses of tennis as a metaphor for fortune.

thy crosses / Thou givest me somewhat to repair myself" (2.1.117–18). Notably, Pericles thanks "Fortune," and not divine providence, for helping to restore him; the word "providence" never appears in the play, suggesting that its presence can only be apprehended in time and by means of an interpretive process through which fortune's "crosses" come to reveal a larger design. As we shall see, the play's thematization of how patience reveals the fortunes of the sea to be provident also seeks to model a playgoing practice of patient engagement that leads in time to a conjunction of pleasure and virtue. The pun on "crosses" captures the temporal relationship between the adversities of fortune and the underlying presence of a divine plan, the comprehension of which is not just a matter of perspective but one of time. If fortune may appear to be an end in itself, meting out meaningless and unexplainable outcomes, it masks an underlying providence that comes into view with patient waiting and faith.

The providential fortune that guides Pericles's travels is most fully revealed through the eventual reunion of his family, which in turn enables him to reclaim his throne in Tyre and cements his claims to Pentapolis and Mytilene, thus facilitating the expansion of Pericles's empire. Through its depiction of an underlying providence guiding travel, the play models lessons about virtuous travel and its potential rewards that apply to both sea travel and to play-watching. Patience, the play suggests, offers the best course of action for navigating seas that appear to be governed by arbitrary fortune. Evoking the Athenian statesman of the Golden Age, the name Pericles, changed from Apollonius in the play's sources, may reflect the play's investment in valorizing patience: whereas Plutarch stresses the patience (as well as the naval and imperial accomplishments) of the Athenian Pericles, patience is not a key characteristic of Gower's Apollonius.[23] So, too, in Shakespeare's play, Pericles does not attempt to fight the fortunes of the sea but rides them out. At the same time, the play seems to counsel an active, rather than a passive form of patient engagement, which differs from the lessons of stoicism, which insist upon the relinquishment and devaluation of all earthly rewards. After losing his wife Thaisa to the sea, Pericles travels to Tarsus with the newborn Marina. In response to Cleon's comment that the "shafts of fortune / . . . have hurt [him] mortally" (3.3.5–6) and Dionyza's anguished reference to the "strict fates" (3.3.8), he responds, "We cannot but obey / The powers above us. Could I rage and roar / As doth the sea she lies in, yet the end / Must be as 'tis" (3.3.9–12). For Pericles, patience acknowledges and helps to facilitate an alignment with God's providence, which may in fact be manifested in a massive worldly payoff. However, it is significant that Pericles's unforeseen end, his eventual reunion with his family, comes with material rewards that are the byproduct rather than the objective of his

23. For this argument, see J. M. S. Tompkins, "Why *Pericles*?" *RES*, n.s., 3 (1952): 315–22.

travels. It is not hard to see how the idea that a traveler's fortunes were in fact providential helped not only to mitigate the tremendous losses of sea travel but also divorced personal ambition from commercial and imperial gains. An *accidental* imperialist, Pericles amasses an empire with no intention or conscious awareness of doing so. In turn, the play valorizes patient endurance and suffering as key characteristics of the virtuous *traveler-cum-imperialist*. Such a model offers a stark contrast to Prospero's direct and aggressive methods of colonization in *The Tempest*. And, insofar as the play makes the audience member into an active partner in the coherence and resolution of the play's seemingly contingent events, *Pericles* also cultivates patience as a productive quality in an audience. Its dramatic resolution rewards the patient endurance of protagonist and audience alike with pleasurable and virtuous gains.

Marina, too, named for the sea in a departure from the play's sources, owes her fate to the fortune and potential providence of the sea: it is when "Fortune's mood / Varies again" and "The grisly north / Disgorges such a tempest forth" that Thaisa is sent into premature labor with Marina (3.0.46–48); and it is "most ungentle Fortune" (4.5.100) and "wayward fortune" (5.1.80) that Marina blames for landing her in Mytilene and "malign[ing] her state" (5.1.80) until after once again "Riding her fortunes" (5.3.11) Marina finds herself aboard Pericles's ship and reunited with her father. Perhaps more so than Pericles, Marina endures her fortunes with patience; she in fact counsels Pericles to exercise patience when recounting her story (5.1.135), as does her midwife during the storm when Marina is born (3.1.19). Faced with the incomprehensibility of her fortunes, Marina tends to respond with patience and fortitude, allowing her fortunes to become legible in time. Fortune, operating through the sea, unmakes, and then remakes Pericles's and Marina's identities. It deprives them of their family, and then gives it back. These are, of course, common motifs in the genre of romance. As Sarah Beckwith has observed, "Romance is the form that systematically converts chance into providence."[24] And yet, as I am arguing, *Pericles* represented the conversional potential of the sea of chance in unique ways that reflected upon its own existence as a performative, commercial medium, and that gave significance to how a theatrical audience experienced Pericles's and Marina's fortunes and interpreted and authorized a providential reading of them.

If fortune is attributed to the sea in *Pericles*, it is also dependent upon the act of interpreting the sea's doings—an interpretation made by Gower as narrator, by the characters who exist within the play's fiction, and by the audience who experiences the sea as fortune through the play's episodic plot. In this sense, if the play

24. Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 92.

foregrounds fortune's autonomy, it also undermines it by drawing attention to the process of interpretation—both semiotic and phenomenological—through which audiences made meaning of fortune. As Witmore suggests, the ability to view an accident "as an opportunity for revelation . . . depends on its association with narrative contriving."[25] In the space of the theater, the process of "narrative contriving" is uniquely transfigured through the medium of performance, and specifically through the cognitive and affective work of spectatorship. It is in response to bodily endurance (at sea, in the theater) that the mind makes its semiotic efforts. Such a view of the theater contrasts with the charges of antitheatricalists who argued that the theater was dangerous because it overcame the passions of theatergoers. As I illustrate further below, *Pericles* associates its popular audience with a communal agency that is capable of discerning and interpreting the meanings of theatrical performance.

GOWER'S NARRATION AND THE DRAMATURGY OF THE SEA

Importantly, the audience's interpretation of the sea was shaped by the significant challenges and limitations that the theater (and the early modern theater in particular) faced in representing the ocean. *Pericles*'s peculiarity resides in the fact that so much of its action is driven by the sea and takes place at sea, when the sea's enormity and power eludes theatrical representation. Pericles and his family members travel to Tyre, Antioch, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Mytilene, and Ephesus—six different Mediterranean settings—charting a total of ten different trips between these various locales.[26] It is as though the play flaunts its own representational limitations. In direct contrast to Gosson's fears that the sensory effects of performance might overwhelm spectators, *Pericles*'s representation of the sea underwhelms the senses, showing how the very symbol that Gosson appropriates to exemplify the theater's danger—the turbulent sea—is ironically deprived of its disorienting sensory effects because of the theater's particular incapacities and representational limitations. In place of seafaring action, we get Gower's narration. In all, Gower interposes himself in the action eight times, framing the seven main episodes of the play. At times, he reflects on past action or sets the stage for

25. Witmore, *Culture of Accidents*, 5.

26. For important foundational discussions of the significance of the play's Mediterranean geography, see Walter Cohen, "The Undiscovered Country: Shakespeare and Mercantile Geography," in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow (London: Routledge, 2001), 128–58; and Linda McJannet, "Genre and Geography: The Eastern Mediterranean in *Pericles* and *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Associated University Press, 1998), 86–106.

future action, but more often his narration stands in for the action itself. For example, here is what stands in for Pericles's voyage from Tarsus to Pentapolis:

> For now the wind begins to blow;
> Thunder above and deeps below
> Makes such unquiet that the ship
> Should house him safe is wracked and split.
>
> (2.0.29–32)

Gower's lines do little to conjure the vast spectacle and sense-enveloping presence of a sea storm; in fact, their hypnotic rhythm seems to counter the erratic violence of a storm. When Gower returns again to the stage, it is to narrate Pericles's subsequent departure from Pentapolis, where again a sea storm throws him off course. In this case Gower's lines better simulate the ocean's turbulence through their choppy metrics and enjambments, but they inevitably fall short of conjuring the dynamic physical force of the sea:

> And so to sea. Their vessel shakes
> On Neptune's billow. Half the flood
> Hath their keel cut. But Fortune, moved,
> Varies again. The grizzled North
> Disgorges such a tempest forth
> That, as a duck for life that dives,
> So up and down the poor ship drives.
>
> (3.0.44–50)

This narration locates the audience's perspective with Gower, rather than with Pericles, as though viewing the tossing ship, "as a duck for life that dives," from the safety of shore. As Blumenberg discusses, the security of the spectator is a necessary condition for curiosity and critical engagement, because it distances the spectator from an immediate concern for their own danger and survival.[27] For Blumenberg, who also draws a comparison between the spectator on the shore and the theatrical spectator, the theater crucially differs from the seashore in that it converts moral stakes into aesthetic ones; however, for Shakespeare and Wilkins, the willing engagement of the theatrical audience ultimately imbues the playgoing experience with a moral payoff. As I continue to argue below, *Pericles*

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27. Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 39.

posits the potential for morality and art to be conjoined through the commercial theater. In this process, Gower functions something like a surrogate for the spectator, nudging the audience toward its interpretations and helping to accommodate them to the demands of the public theater. While not equivalent with the role of providence, Gower plays a proscriptive, mediating role in his guiding of the audience's viewing practices. Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann's insights on the role of the dramatic prologue offer a useful characterization of Gower's positionality apart from and between playhouse constituencies, including actors, audience members, and playwrights alike.[28] In using terms such as "liminal," "mediating" "threshold," and "go-between" to describe the prologue's function in "defin[ing] the contours of theatrical representation," Bruster and Weimann suggest that prologues played an active role in managing audiences, rather than being merely solicitous.[29] In the case of *Pericles*, Gower's role as Prologue is extended throughout the play to introduce and stitch together each new episode. Gower thus serves as a continuous mediating presence who shapes and reinforces the audience's experience.

As is excessively the case in *Pericles*, Gower also provides explanation for what the stage cannot show. In place of the stimulating sensory experience of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, even tasting the ocean, the audience gets old Gower, a single body on the stage in the voluminous space of the Globe amphitheater, perhaps walking, gesturing, telling them what to see. While the play's extensive use of narration served a practical purpose by enabling the stage to represent action that could not be shown, it begs the question: why produce a play that depends so heavily on action and spectacle that eludes visual representation? Arguably, it makes for bad theater, contributing to what Suzanne Gossett characterizes as the long-standing "critical slighting of *Pericles*," even though as she reminds us, the play was enormously successful in its time.[30] I share Gossett's zeal for "taking *Pericles* seriously," perhaps especially for what the divergence between its early modern and modern receptions might tell us.[31] The fact that live performances of *Pericles* waned precipitously with the emergence of theatrical realism supports my sense that the play's style of representation and audience engagement was very much historically contingent. *Pericles*'s dramaturgical conventions suggest a disinterest in verisimilitude and a particular interplay between spoken language and visual spectacle that seem foreign to our modern-day expectations of theater.

28. Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London: Routledge, 2004).

29. Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, 2.

30. Suzanne Gossett, "Taking Pericles Seriously," in *Early Modern Tragicomedy*, ed. Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007), 106–7.

31. Gossett, "Taking Pericles Seriously," quoted from title of chapter.

In foregrounding the use of spoken narrative to solicit and privilege a certain process of audience engagement, I want to shed light on how Gower's narration of action at sea exacerbates a tension between what is seen and what is heard that might be applied to early modern drama more broadly.[32] His choric narration subjugates the visual to the audial and transposes the sounds of the sea into narrative descriptions. When Gower says to the audience, "I do beseech you / To learn of me, who stand i'th' gaps to teach you / The stages of our story," he draws attention to his role in shaping both what is seen and not seen: the "gaps" occupy the stage as much as the "stages," or episodes, themselves (4.4.7–9). *Pericles*'s use of narration constitutes not so much an apology for the stage's inadequacies (as is often assumed of the opening Chorus of *Henry V*) but rather a reliance on aural scenery (taken in through the ear) that was pleasurable and engaging in its own right. As Bert States has observed, in Shakespeare's theater, a large burden falls on language to "bridge the gulf between sign and thing": "The character creates a verbal world that bathes what we see before it in its quality."[33] This "quality" helps to explain Henry Crosse's observations in 1603 about how "at a play . . . a man is not wearied be it never so tedious"; rather, "the mind is drawn into expectation of the sequel, and carried from one thing to an other with changeable motions, that although he were unacquainted with the matter before, yet the cunning Art he seeth in the conveyance, maketh him patiently attend the Catastrophae."[34] Gower's bridging of gulfs "between sign and thing," words and action, play world and real world, as well as between one scene or episode to the next, helped to condition the playgoer to await satisfaction by gradually being drawn from event to event. While the spectacle of Gower bore its own phenomenological impact that was neither neutral nor irrelevant, the substitution of Gower's narration for the action of the sea placed enormous emphasis on spoken language to create something out of nothing—a churning sea out of breathy air. Through its radical stripping down of theatrical representation, it lays bare the essence of what theater is and does.

THE WILLING IMAGINATION OF THE AUDIENCE

Pericles's emphasis on spoken language also highlights the audience's interactive role in producing the effects of theatrical performance. As Gower explicitly

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32. Joel Altman makes a similar point in identifying the early modern stage's frequent employment of ekphrasis, understood in the period as the verbal description of a visual representation (not just a work of art) and suggesting that "ekphrasis instantiates early modern theatricality"; see "Ekphrasis," in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 273.

33. Bert States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 55, 57.

34. Henry Crosse, *Vertues Commonwealth* (London, 1603), Q2r–v.

asserts, the success of these scenes requires "attention," "imagination, "patience," and "supposing" on the part of the audience. In describing Pericles and Thaisa's decision to depart Pentapolis for Tyre, Gower urges, "Be attent, / And time that is so briefly spent / With your fine fancies quaintly eche" (3.0.11–13). To conjure their boat at sea, he instructs the audience, "In your imagination hold / This stage the ship, upon whose deck / The sea-tossed Pericles appears to speak" (3.0.58–60). Upon shifting the scene to Marina in Mytilene, he commands, "Now to Marina bend your mind" (4.0.5), and later, "Patience then, / And think you are now in Mytilene" (4.4.50–51). Turning back to the seaborne Pericles, Gower directs, "And to her father turn our thoughts again, / Where we left him, on the sea" (5.0.12–13). And when Pericles's ship is driven by winds to Mytilene, Gower enjoins, "In your supposing once more put your sight: / Of heavy Pericles, think this his bark, / Where what is done in action, more, if might, / Shall be discovered, please you sit and hark" (5.0.21–24). Whereas Daniel Vitkus suggests that the stage's reliance on the audience's imagination to transport characters across time and space fulfilled a fantasy of effortless travel that "render[ed] invisible the time, labor, and expense necessary to make a long-distance voyage," I emphasize how the stage displaced the labor of sea travel onto the playgoer's imagination in order to expose how both seafaring and theatrical performance in fact called upon a similar form of labor.[35] As *Pericles* demonstrates, both sea travel and performance feature unpredictable risks and require patient engagement, as well as faith and imagination, to realize their potential, revealing how a voluntary but somewhat passive form of labor might render fortune provident in time. The labor of imagination involves, among other things, the ability to court potential and to facilitate its unfolding through openness, attentiveness, and allowance. In soliciting the audience's willingness to "sit and hark" and supply through their imaginations what the stage cannot show, Gower foregrounds the audience's necessary role in helping to sustain all performance within the non-naturalistic early modern theater.[36] And, in exploiting the very limitations of the stage, *Pericles* links the unlimited potential of the imagination with that of performance.

In the context of Gower's appeals, such activities as patience, imagination, supposing, thinking, and harking constitute voluntary manifestations of audience

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35. Daniel Vitkus, "Labor and Travel on the Early Modern Stage: Representing the Travail of Travel in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and Shakespeare's *Pericles*," in *Working Subjects in Early Modern Drama*, ed. Michelle Dowd and Natasha Korda (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 233.

36. For an opposing view of Shakespeare's pleas for the imagination and the non-naturalistic stage, see Tiffany Stern, "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama," in *Shakespeare's Theaters and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Arden, 2013), 11–32, which argues that the material stage functioned as a fixed prop that "dictated and circumscribed imaginative space" (32).

engagement, and yet they were not necessarily voluntary by nature. Arguably, any one of these activities could and did happen involuntarily when taking in a play. In early modern England, the degree of control one had over various sensory and cognitive processes was deeply unresolved. Theories of how the imagination worked retained the contradictions present in Aristotle's understanding of *phantasia*, which at times seemed to refer to a function of sensory perception, and at other times suggested the appearance of a mental image that was not necessarily related to sensory perception.[37] In *De anima* Aristotle explicitly describes *phantasia* as subject to the will and thus contrasted with belief, but he then goes on to discuss numerous examples of involuntary phantasia. As Allison Deutermann, Amy Rodgers, and others have shown, the same ambiguity applied to understandings of sensory processing itself and whether it was voluntary or involuntary.[38] In terms of playgoing, someone like Ben Jonson associated "thunderous speech" with involuntary reception, and "lines trippingly pronounced" with selective engagement.[39] William West shows how these kinds of divisions were mapped onto the playhouse theater, where the groundlings were associated with an "understanding" that was immediate and corporeal, and those seated above were thought to possess a superior cognitive understanding.[40] If *Pericles* attempts to locate itself within this matrix, it does so by directly soliciting willful engagement, enlisting processes that might override the involuntary sensory and cognitive processes that go on all the time. When Gower tells the audience to have "patience," to use their "imagination," or to "hark," he is asking them to harness these potentially uncontrollable sensory and cognitive processes, and to willfully enlist them in accordance with the play's demands.

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37. For a fuller treatment of the ambiguities attending early modern understandings of the imagination, including its ancient and proto-scientific inheritances as well as its aestheticization by Shakespeare, see Suparna Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare: Imagination in the Age of Early Modern Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

38. According to Deutermann, contemporary anatomical debates about the processing of sound suggest uncertainty about whether listening could be controlled, to what extent selective listening was possible, and whether a person could determine how deeply they were affected by what they heard; see Allison Deutermann, "'Caviare to the general?': Taste, Hearing, and Genre in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2001): 231. Relatedly, Rodgers's analysis of discourses of spectatorship and the relationship between visual and verbal processing identifies an increasing tendency to associate visual spectacle with ravishment, and verbal or poetic audition with reason or judgment; see Amy Rodgers, "The Language of Looking: Making Senses Speak in Jonsonian Masque," *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 42 (2014): 29–55, and *Monster with a Thousand Hands*.

39. Deutermann, "'Caviare to the general?,'" 235.

40. William West, "Understanding in the Elizabethan Theaters," *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 35 (2006): 114. West ultimately seeks to expose a counterview in which "corporeal knowing underlies and precipitates cognition" (130).

While each of Gower's injunctions has a significantly different meaning, they all share in common a form of labor that is distinctly voluntary and yet compliant in the way that Pericles and Marina ride out their fortunes on the sea. In other words, in asking the audience to help conjure the sea, Gower entreats them to submit to its fortunes and willingly go where it takes them. Only by doing so, the play suggests, will providence be revealed. But in foregrounding the play's reliance on its audience, *Pericles* exposes a major risk of theatrical performance: individual audience members might fail or refuse to engage. Perhaps they are bored, consumed by their own personal thoughts, or distracted by something else in the theater. In the face of possible distractions, Gower directly instructs the audience to attend, but he cannot guarantee that they will obey or engage correctly. As Allison Hobgood observes, "moments of prescription expose the possibility of failure."[41] Such risks are uniquely inherent to the live medium of performance, and include not just the audience's failure or refusal to engage but also the unpredictability of the actors' performance, such as the possibility of forgotten lines or missed cues, lapses in focus or connection with the audience, tripping, sweating, problems with props, and other breaks from character—all of which are influenced by the audience's level of engagement. Particularly in the naturally lit open-air amphitheaters, where audiences were visible to the actors on stage, their responses inevitably affected the actors' choices in the moment. Seeking to characterize the continuous dynamic exchange between audience and stage, Erika Fischer-Lichte employs the concept of a "feedback loop," which she describes as "a self-referential, autopoietic system enabling a fundamentally open, unpredictable process."[42] She states, "The autopoietic feedback loop, consisting of the mutual interaction between actors and spectators, brings forth performance."[43] *Pericles*'s extensive reliance on verbal narration may be seen to maximize the risks associated with this feedback loop and its spontaneous, unpredictable nature. Will Gower hold the audience's attention? Will the audience accept a play almost entirely set at sea when that sea must reside only in its mind's eye? Will they allow themselves to be carried along for the ride? In addition, if plays and players faced a risk of too little audience engagement, audiences faced a risk of becoming too emotionally engaged. As if in response to this risk, *Pericles* posits the safety of giving over to the theatrical experience; it suggests that playgoers can trust the theater not to harm them and that pleasure need not be corrupting. In other words, it contests Gosson's view that

41. Allison Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 182.

42. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), 39.

43. Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power of Performance*, 163.

theater's similarity to a ship at sea is a bad thing, that the only safe ship is one at anchor. In my reading, the giving over that *Pericles* asks of its audience is not dependent on the susceptibility of a naive audience or one that is passive or uncritical but rather relies on the audience's willingness to accept its role in the making of a performance that could be morally fructifying and commercially successful.

The size and diversity of amphitheater audiences compounded the risks of live performance and the challenges of sustaining audience engagement. The lone spectacle of Gower and the extensive airtime given to a single actor's voice meant something particular in the Globe Theater. These performance conditions suggest another way in which *Pericles* differed from *The Tempest*, which was performed in the much smaller, indoors Blackfriars Theater. While there is a tendency among some critics to associate *Pericles* in tangential ways with the Blackfriars Theater so as to support its grouping with Shakespeare's other "late plays,"[44] it is crucial that *Pericles* was intended for performance at the Globe, where Gower would have repeatedly enlisted the use of imagination from a heterogeneous sea of many hundreds (even thousands) of people.[45] In hazarding the limited audial and visual impact of a single body against such a large audience, *Pericles* strains at the limits of audience engagement. The significance of the Globe's socially diverse public audience enhanced the risk of pursuing a communal response but also empowered the embodied cognitive faculties common to all audience members and heightened the potential power of a shared engagement.

If the Globe courted diversity, its communal setting would have also guided individual responses, perhaps compelling some degree of conformity.[46] Inevitably, the bodies of playgoers responded to the presence of one another as much as to the staged performance. As Ian Munro has argued, the phenomenological implications of London's population explosion over the course of the sixteenth century played out in the public theater, where "the crowd is at once audience and

44. See, e.g., Tiffany Stern, "Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars," in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna, 2006), 39. For an opposing view that sees little evidence for separate Globe and Blackfriars repertories at the time, see Roslyn L. Knutson, "What If There Wasn't a 'Blackfriars Repertory'?" in the same collection, 54–60.

45. By contrast, Paul Menzer draws attention to the possibility of an audience that is too sparse (though this seems not to apply to *Pericles*), suggesting an opposite but no less powerful contingency affecting performance and reception; see "Crowd Control," in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558–1642*, ed. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), 19–36.

46. On the communal experience of early modern playgoing, see Menzer, "Crowd Control," esp. 26; and Anthony Dawson, "Performance and Participation," in *The Culture of Playgoing in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11–37.

subject, at once watching and participating in the performance."[47] Like the staged performance, the audience was a live and embodied entity. In the second scene of *The Roaring Girl*, Wentgrave describes the "floor" of the Fortune Theater as a body that "waves to and fro, / Like a floating island [that] seems to move / Upon a sea, bound in with shores above" (1.2.30–32).[48] The undulating movement of the ocean offers an apt metaphor for the embodied, affective presence of the audience. Emotion might swell within the crowd, or within individual crowds that comprise the different sections of the amphitheater.[49] Hobgood theorizes how this might take place by positing the transmissible nature of emotions. She argues that emotions were both "deliberately and accidentally shared between one body and the next," and that the stage, in turn, could "count on affective contagion as a technique of engagement."[50] Shifting slightly from Hobgood's focus on emotional transmission, I draw attention to the theater's reliance on group imagination and other cognitive processes that sustained early modern theatrical representation. Distinct from the dichotomy between emotion and reason, which was often mapped onto a class hierarchy, these processes could be willfully activated by any body in the popular audience. At the same time, the particular conditions of diversity and anonymity that were unique to the popular theater enabled a collective response forged by the intimacy of an experience shared with strangers.

If Gower elicits the communal engagement of a popular audience, it is important to note that his archaic diction and verse form resist transparency. Their distinctiveness, I suggest, contributes to the dramaturgical effect of his narration by eschewing verisimilitude and drawing attention to its own artifice. Gower's use of iambic tetrameter couplets complicates the critical narrative of Shakespeare's evolving metrical style (which identifies earlier plays with metrical conformity and heavily end-stopped verse, and later plays with metrical variation and a greater percentage of enjambed lines).[51] In actuality, Shakespeare's use of iambic tetrameter is perhaps more pervasive than critics tend to acknowledge, though Gower's

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47. Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and Its Double* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5.

48. *The Roaring Girl*, ed. Coppélia Kahn, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 730.

49. See Bruce Smith, "E/loco/com/motion," in *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 131–50, for an account of the phenomenological experience of movement in the early modern theater that traces the movements of "emotion," locomotion," and "commotion."

50. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England*, 14, 180.

51. For an overview of Shakespeare's evolving metrical style, see Matteo Pangallo, "Dramatic Metre," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 100–125. For a foundational discussion of Shakespeare's use of poetic meter, see George T. Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

sustained use of this metrical form is distinctive and reinforces the anachronism of his character. Critics have persuasively attributed *Pericles*'s use of tetrameter to George Wilkins's coauthorship, noting the shifts over the course of the play from tetrameter to pentameter.[52] But iambic tetrameter is also the verse form employed by Gower in his fourteenth-century *Confesssio amantis* (the play's chief source), so its use in *Pericles* is intentionally archaic and citational. As R.F. Yeager has observed, Gower's metrical regularity was distinctive: "At a time wide-open to metrical variation, Gower chose to test the effects of consistency."[53] His choice of octosyllables—a form common to English ballads—allowed for patterns of alliteration based on pairs, which enhanced oral comprehension and was also suited to memorization.[54] Tied in with Gower's use of the vernacular and his employment of "plain speech," this verse form was associated with reaching a wide and non-elite audience, though it also evoked the form of French *dits* and the courtly romance tradition. In *Pericles* the use of iambic tetrameter draws attention to the form's artifice, its difference, and its existence out of time and place. Unlike the natural spoken English that iambic pentameter attempts to simulate, each line of Gower's is audible as a line. By contrast, Shakespeare's later plays, especially the "romances" with which *Pericles* is often grouped, employ a combination of iambic pentameter and metrical variance that lends itself to "dramatic naturalism," or a kind of presentational expression of meaning.[55] In Gower's speeches in *Pericles*, the precedence of form over meaning solicits auditory engagement that is conscious and deliberate.

And yet if the play pulls against the natural cadences of spoken English with its persistent archaism, it also adopts a solicitous stance toward its audience, positioning it as an ally rather than an obstacle to successful performance. If the play insists on patience, it also promises pleasure. Its opening lines gesture toward its interest in providing a pleasurable experience: "To sing a song that old was sung / From ashes ancient Gower is come, / Assuming man's infirmities / To glad your ear and please your eyes" (1.01–4). These are not the words of someone who wants to alienate his audience. Despite its antiquation, Gower's verse has a lulling yet propulsive quality, hypnotic like the sea on a calm day. Like smooth sailing, its rhythmic cadences are easy on the ears. While the verse form may not be "natural," its clipped lines, short words, and end-stopped couplets facilitate clarity and are effective for the large, crowded space of the amphitheater. If, as Deutermann

52. As Gossett observes in her analysis of the play's metrical variations, "the choruses prefacing the first three acts, and that in the middle of the fifth act (Choruses 1, 2, 3, and 7), are in tetrameter couplets. . . . Choruses 4, 5, and 8 are in pentameter couplets. Chorus 6, which introduces the last act, is formed of pentameters with alternate rhymes" (Introduction, *Pericles*, 69).

53. R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 22.

54. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, 30.

55. F. E. Halliday, *The Poetry of Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), 27.

has argued, *Hamlet* valorizes listening that is cautious, selective, and morally discerning, *Pericles* cultivates a different ideal listener. Less cautious and circumspect, this ideal listener willfully gives over—not to thunderous noise or manipulation—but to a pleasurable experience that is simultaneously edifying and morally uplifting.

MARRYING PLEASURE, PROFIT, AND VIRTUE

The idea that paying customers might purchase a playgoing experience that is both pleasurable and morally profitable sits at the heart of *Pericles*'s orientation to its audience. At the start of the play, Gower articulates this linked objective: if the performance will "glad your ear and please your eyes" (1.0.4), its "purchase" is also "to make men glorious" (1.0.9). He emerges from "ashes" to "sing a song that old was song / . . . at festivals, / on ember eves and holy days." Such a tradition, he suggests, may not accord with the tastes and expectations of audiences of "these latter times / When wit's more ripe," and yet he implores the audience's patient indulgence with the promise of a theatrical experience that is "restorative" and that "may to your wishes pleasure bring." *Pericles* is a play that identifies its theatrical value in the transmission of pleasure and restoration, an enhancement of health associated with both moral and bodily nourishment. Unlike the festive practices of England's past, Gower's spectacle is distinctly commercial, though he promises to deliver the moral edification of traditional entertainments. Such an objective resonates with the fourteenth-century Gower's adoption of a "middle weie" between lust and lore, or delight and orthodox Christian teaching. While firmly committed to the principle that poetry should serve a redemptive purpose, Gower was also "sensitive to Horace's dictum that the best poetry combines teaching and pleasure."[56]

In embracing a similar goal for the commercial theater, Shakespeare and Wilkins addressed particular contemporary concerns about the theater's corrupting effects on audiences, which were often linked to its commercialization. In a sense, the theater's pursuit of monetary fortune aligned it with an idolatrous faith in the secular operations of fortune. As Kathleen McLuskie has discussed, antitheatrical protests "focused on theater as an abuse of poetry because it turned it into a commodity": in this way "judgment was set against payment and words against spectacle."[57] In linking patient engagement to a pleasurable and virtuous payoff, *Pericles* also links moral and financial investment, and implicitly purifies

56. Kurt Olsson, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion: A Reading of the* Confessio Amantis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 31.

57. Kathleen McLuskie, "Figuring the Consumer for Early Modern Drama," in *Rematerialising Shakespeare: Authority and Representation on the Early Modern English Stage*, ed. Bryan Reynolds and William West (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 200.

its own pursuit of monetary fortune within a system of proto-capitalist commerce. Both Steven Mullaney and Valerie Forman have read *Pericles* as an expression of a cultural discomfort with commerce and profit.[58] My own reading sees the potential for commerce to be virtuous in *Pericles*, but rather than positing an equivalence between commerce and virtue, the play shows how commerce can convert pleasure into virtue, or fortune into providence, through the transformative, interactive process of performance.

In a similar way, Marina earns huge profits in the brothel (a setting allegorically evocative of the commercial theater) not by satisfying her customers with base pleasures but by converting them to honor. As Amy Rodgers has argued, "Marina's ability to transform the indiscriminate spectatorial gaze [of her customers] into one that is self-reflexive and self-governing is part and parcel of *Pericles*'s impulse to instruct its spectators with guidelines for 'right looking.'"[59] Like Gower, Marina employs spoken narrative to transform and edify her audience. She also counsels them in the virtues of patience, which lead to an eternal reward far more valuable than the immediate gratification of their carnal desires. Similar to brokers, both Marina and Gower solicit a long-term investment on the part of their audiences. The instant gratification and base pleasures associated with the brothel mark the limit of acceptable pleasure; like the incest introduced in the play's opening scene, the brothel's illicit sexuality poses a threat to the reconstitution of dynastic genealogy that the play ultimately aligns with providential resolution. In creating virtuous reward out of pleasure-seeking commerce, Gower and Marina epitomize the role of theater in producing a kind of value whose exchange value is in turn performed by the audience. Mirroring the transaction happening in the theater through the action of the play, *Pericles* aligns its commercial success—coterminous with the audience's participation and engagement—with an ennobling effect.

As I have argued, a chief way *Pericles* goes about this is by eliciting its audience's willing participation in the process of patiently making meaning out of seemingly random and chaotic events. Like seafaring, theatrical performance features risks that might be arbitrated by either fortune or providence. In helping to create the ocean's churnings through their patient engagement and imagination,

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58. For Mullaney (drawing on Jameson), the play disassociates itself from commerce and "represents a radical effort to imagine that popular drama can be a purely aesthetic phenomenon." Forman, by contrast, argues that the play "attempts to make economic practices seem ethical" by reconciling economic gain with Christian redemption. See Steven Mullaney, "'All That Monarchs Do': The Obscured Stages of Authority in *Pericles*," in *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 147; and Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions*, 64.

59. Rodgers, *Monster with a Thousand Hands*, 96.

the audience becomes part of the process by which the sea's vicissitudes are revealed to be provident at the end of the play, when the sea returns Pericles's family to one another. The play's morally laden lesson that providence eventually rewards patience is manifested thematically, representationally, and also through the pleasures and profits afforded by commercial performance. In effect, *Pericles* asks spectators to place their faith in the potential of theatrical performance, characterizing the commercial theater as a mechanism that converts patience into pleasure, and pleasure into virtue. By means of a process that combines willing participation with letting go, the popular audience's engagement with theatrical performance held the potential to make meaning out of fortune, to produce enchantment out of chance.