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The Geographies of Shakespeare's Cymbeline

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is emphatically set in Britain. More than *King Lear*, Shakespeare's other canonical "British" play, *Cymbeline* continually draws attention to its own historical and geographical setting in ancient Britain. The stage directions mark the location of Cymbeline's palace as "Britain" each time, in distinction to "Wales" and "Rome," the other two named locations in the stage directions. The word "Britain" or related words are mentioned constantly in the dialogue while they are barely mentioned in *Lear*.¹ I am starting then with an assumption that *Cymbeline* is self-consciously concerned with the idea of "Great Britain." The problematic and contested location of "Great Britain" in the period immediately following James VI of Scotland's accession to the English throne informs the geographies of the play. The peculiarities of its setting are brought about by the remapping of the space of the nation that is entailed in James's accession. By the play's geographies, I mean both the topographies and cartographies within the play as well as the location of the performances of the play on stages in Jacobean London. I will be particularly concerned with the locatedness of the play in relation to wider Jacobean concerns with the space of the nation and the place of the stage. The locatedness of the theater, both its use of distinct geographical, political, and historical settings, and its own material and symbolic positions within a map of the nation, will contribute to *Cymbeline*'s intervention in the Union debate.²

1. The Oxford concordance to the folio text of the play lists one mention of "Britain," 34 mentions of "Britaine," 13 mentions of "Britaines," one each of "Britanie" and "Brittaine" and a further two mentions of "Brittish," making 52 in total (T. Howard-Hill, *A Concordance to the Text of the First Folio: Cymbeline*, Oxford, 1972).

2. By the "Union debate," I mean the attempt made by James to rename his two kingdoms "Great Britain" and the subsequent resistance from the English Parliament. This history has been usefully discussed in relation to *Cymbeline* in Ernest Jones's "Stuart *Cymbeline*," in *Essays in Criticism*, 2 (1961), and in Willy Maley, "Postcolonial Shakespeare: British Identity Formation and *Cymbeline*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays*, ed. J. Richards and J. Knowles (Edinburgh, 1999).

Where “Britain” actually is situated in the play, is left somewhat undecided, despite the play’s paranoid reminders to the audience that this is, in fact, “Britain.” What “Britain” as a political entity is able to include and what it excludes are issues that are not resolved, even though it is precisely these questions around which the dramatic action of the play revolves. The nature and position of “Britain” in the play exist in unclear distinction to three other locations—Wales, Rome, and Renaissance Italy. The other named location—Lud’s Town (London)—also plays its part in the cartography of Britain in *Cymbeline*, as does Britain’s unnamed shadow in the play—England, the missing term.

II. WALES

[IMOGEN:] Accessible is none but Milford Way (3.2.83)³

A map of *Cymbeline*’s Britain would appear to be a little unusual since Wales is at least partially separated from Britain, even though Britain is a term that is ordinarily taken to include Wales. In the stage directions Wales is included in the same location as *Cymbeline*’s palace, insofar as neither is said to be in England, but at the same time, it is isolated, its specificity insisted upon. In the play “Britain” manages both to include and to exclude the location of “Wales.” Although Wales seems in some ways to be under the jurisdiction of *Cymbeline*, as King of Britain, the extent of his control is made uncertain in the play. Wales is demarcated as being “somewhere else” in various ways from the space that his court inhabits. At one point the General of the Roman forces, Lucius, requests safe conduct to Milford Haven. *Cymbeline* subsequently instructs his attendant lords to accompany Lucius “Till he have cross’d the Severn” (3.5.17). Lucius will have a difficult time finding his way from the border to the coast. While it may be assumed, and certainly is by Lucius, that *Cymbeline* controls Wales, the King himself is not so sure.

This could be considered as particularly odd in the light of the fact that Wales was traditionally thought of as the last location of the Britons in the British archipelago. Nowhere could be more British than Wales, to the extent that it was possible in some circumstances to effect an elision between the two terms “Britain” and “Wales” in much the same way as an Anglocentric naming of the nation space frequently makes England and Britain virtually synonymous. In the introduction to the first English

3. All quotations from *Cymbeline* are from J. M. Nosworthy’s New Arden edition of the play (1969).

edition of the *Britannia* in 1610, William Camden wrote of his need to delve beyond the modern English language in his pursuit of that ever elusive goal of the early modern antiquarian, the origins of the British nation(s): “I thereupon in Etymologies and my conjectures have made recourse to the British, or Welsh tongue (so they now call it) as being the same which the primitive and ancient inhabitants of this land used, and to the English-Saxons tongue which our Progenitors the English spake.”⁴ For Camden, at least here, Britain and Wales are synonymous, and both are replaced and displaced by the “English-Saxons.” The contemporary “Britannia” of Camden’s title, the late sixteenth–, early seventeenth-century Britannia, replaces the old Britain that was synonymous with Wales. Now Britain is synonymous with England, or it at least stands in place for a nation that is clearly dominated by the English race and tongue. That this involves a displacement is also covertly acknowledged in Camden’s passage. The phrase in parenthesis, “so they now call it,” reveals a history of difference, underlining the fact that the term “Britain” is a site of conflict, and that to map the British nation as “Britain” is always to invite narratives of the past to invade the homogenous space of the present. They might call it the Welsh tongue *now*, but the political boundaries of the present are not necessarily endorsed in Camden’s, or in Shakespeare’s, excavations of Britain’s ancient political configuration.

The Birth of Merlin, an apocryphal Shakespeare text, deals with the relationship between “Wales” and “Britain” in a way that is more ambiguous than this, and also rather more confusing. The King of Welsh “Brittain,” Vortiger, sides with the heathenish, invading Saxons against the King of Brittain proper, Aurelius. Aurelius is clearly the hero of the play. In making the differentiation between a Britain that is just Welsh, and a Britain that is clearly proto-English, Aurelius is able to be British and yet not Welsh, the perfect solution to the ironic conundrums invoked by Camden’s “so they now call it.” The differences over time in the political makeup of “Britain” are rendered as a stark opposition in this play.⁵ Like *Cymbeline*, the play’s geographies seem to include and exclude Wales from the political borders of Britain, although in *Cymbeline* this relationship is not worked out as a blatant opposition between Wales and the rest of Britain, but rather as a confused and anxious attempt at inclusion.

4. William Camden, *Britain* (tr. P. Holland) (1610), “Preface to the Reader.”

5. See Mark Dominik, *William Shakespeare and The Birth of Merlin* (Beaverton, 1985).

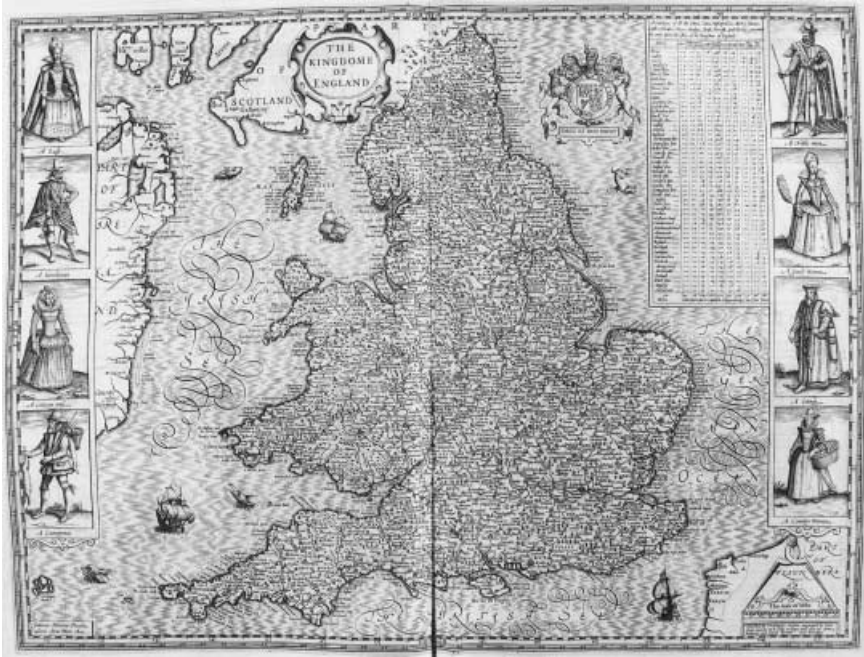


Fig. 1: “Kingdome of England” © Brotherton Library University of Leeds 20.6.02

In John Speed’s 1611 atlas, *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, published at about the same time as the first performances of *Cymbeline*, there are included four maps of the separate nations that constitute this “empire” of Great Britain.⁶ On the map of England, Wales is not distinguished from its larger neighbor [fig. 1]. It is part of the “Kingdome of England,” politically accurate since Henry VIII’s Act of Union in 1536. Unlike the outlines of Scotland and Ireland on this map, it is fully mapped in, with as much detail as the rest of “England.” However, on the map of Wales, England is not mapped in [fig. 2]. Although part of the kingdom of England, its separate nationhood is acknowledged on its own map. Not only is Wales acknowledged, its status as “other” to England is emphasized by the map’s setting. All around the margins of the map of Wales are illustrations of the famous Welsh castles, indicating a history of Anglo-Welsh conflict and the intractability of the Welsh despite English military endeavors. On the map of Ireland, the west coast

6. John Speed, *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1613).

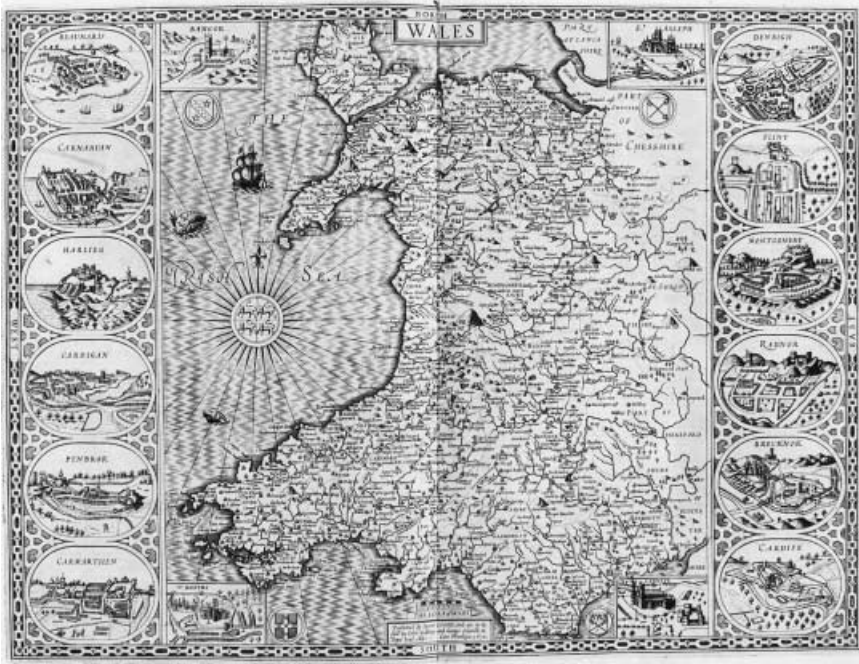


Fig. 2: “Wales” © Brotherton Library University of Leeds LS2 9JT 20.6.02

of “Britain,” most of which consists of Wales on this map, is clearly marked “Part of England,” the “England” being confidently inscribed on the map of Wales [fig. 3]. Wales is both included and marginal in this imaginary empire. This inclusion or exclusion seems largely dependant on perspective—whether you are looking at Wales from within or from England. It depends on whether you want to concentrate on English dominance or on England’s ability to enclose the several nations under its imperial wing. The map of Ireland, so clearly part of a colonial project, can be said to view Wales as part of a larger, imperial England. It is when Wales comes to be considered in itself that its potential to split off from its larger neighbor comes into its own.

If it is part of the project of Speed’s atlas to produce an empire for James that does not in fact exist, then Wales sits uncomfortably within the atlas. It exists in an unstable relation to the imperial inclusiveness that is implied in Speed’s title and that is undertaken in the mapping project as a whole. If the name of “Great Britaine” implied an English superiority, in some instances at least, Wales’s seeming ability to exist both within



Fig. 3: “The Kingdome of Irland” © Brotherton Library University of Leeds LS2 9JT 20.6.02

and outside the boundaries of England suggests that its incorporation into an Anglo-centric British imperial island might prove problematic. This inclusion might be shadowed by an irony that refuses the simple closure, or the happy ending, of the theatrical empire. This is doubly strange inasmuch as Wales offered some measure of support for James’s project for a nominal union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, unlike its somewhat frosty reception in the two countries under consideration. In many ways it is precisely *in* Wales that the Union is born.⁷

7. In an essay on the situation of Milton’s *Masque Presented at Ludlow* in relation to the political situation of the Welsh Marches, Philip Schwyzer has written of the Welsh support for the British project: “As the living remnant of the ancient British race—displaced from England and from Scotland by foreign invasions—the Welsh could claim to have kept the flame of Britain alight through long ages of division, subjugation, and marginalization. To some Welsh writers, the union of the kingdoms spelled nothing less than an end to marginality.” P. Schwyzer, “Purity and Danger on the West Bank of the Severn: The Cultural Geography of *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle 1634*,” in *Representations*, 60 (1997), 27. In this context, it is perhaps not so peculiar that an English author writing for the London stage should wish to re-marginalize Wales in the new context of the Union debate and of the reinvention of Britain as both Jacobean and “Great.”

I have already indicated that this uncertain cartography is echoed in the stage directions of *Cymbeline*, where Wales is separated within Britain. Although *Cymbeline*'s court is in "Britain," "Wales" is somewhere else. In terms of stage directions, the characters of the play seem to travel out of Britain in order to arrive in Wales. If we were to draw a map of *Cymbeline*'s Britain, it would perhaps be just as ambiguous about inclusions and exclusions as Speed's atlas. *Cymbeline*'s ancient kingdom has the same problems with its borders as James's new, unified kingdoms. In this context the contemporary account of the play by the diarist Simon Forman becomes interesting. Editors have traditionally used this account to date the play, but I think it could equally be used to *locate* the play. Throughout his account Forman refers to "Cimbalin king of England."⁸ As my reading of the play as emphatically located in Britain would suggest, it would be possible to take this as a wilful misreading, a prototype of the typically English conflation of Britain with England. England is never mentioned in the play. Forman, like so many after him, just hears England when it is Britain that is being mentioned. It is a misunderstanding on Forman's part that is, however, written into the play. England is noticeable by its absence in *Cymbeline*, but Wales is so clearly demarcated as elsewhere that it becomes difficult to understand *Cymbeline*, the King, as the king of a whole, or unified Britain. These are the ironies and inconsistencies of anachronism, past configurations of "Britain," placing under question the unity of the present kingdom of "Great Britaine." Forman's account of the Romans landing in England in the play is a little more difficult to understand, however, as they clearly land at Milford Haven, a place notorious for being on the southwest coast of Wales. It could, however, be taken as part of Wales's doubleness in the play. In the typo-geography of Milford it is constitutive of a British legitimacy, that for all its Welsh styling is Anglocentric in its working out. That is, in the British tradition which *Cymbeline* is drawing upon, Milford as a location has much more to say about the legitimacy of a monarchy based in England trading on the elisions between British imperialism and Anglocentrism in government than it does about Wales as such.

The doubleness of Wales's location in terms of a map of the play's setting is repeated again within the dramatic action. Wales has to be travelled to—Imogen worries about its distance from the court and cannot find her way when she wants to be with Posthumus, who has just sent her a

8. Printed in Nosworthy's introduction to the Arden edition, pp. xiv–xv.

note, through Pisanio, saying that he has arrived there. It is not a location that she is expected to be familiar with, asking Pisanio to look it up in a book, or even perhaps an atlas: “He is at Milford-Haven: read, and tell me / How far ’tis thither” (3.2.50–51). Imogen’s keenness to get to Milford leads her to adopt a kind of cartographic perspective in that she imagines she is already there.

[Imo:] I see before me, man: nor here, nor here,
 Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them,
 That I cannot look through. Away, I prithee,
 Do as I bid thee: there’s no more to say:
 Accessible is none but Milford way. (3.2.79–83)

That you might need a map to get to Milford is mentioned by Cloten later on, when he follows Imogen across the country. He uses Pisanio’s instructions to follow Imogen to where she is to meet Posthumus. “I am near to th’place where they should meet,” he says, “if Pisanio have *mapp’d* it truly” (4.1.1–2, my italics). Even if Pisanio has not actually drawn him a map, which would in fact be a useful prop at this moment in the play, the written description he has given must be imagined as map-like, comprehending Wales as somewhere far away, where the members of the British court might easily become lost.

In Imogen’s move toward the reconciliations of the play, all roads lead to Milford Haven.⁹ But during her journey, when Pisanio has left her to her own devices, Imogen finds that Milford Haven is farther than she had thought, and it continues to be an ever elusive goal: “Milford, / When from the mountain-top Pisanio show’d thee, / Thou was within a ken. O Jove! I think / Foundations fly the wretched” (3.6.4–7). Wales and Milford are separated from the court of Cymbeline cartographically. They may be visible from an English mountain, but the cartographic perspective separates them and refuses them an inclusion within England. When Imogen had looked at Wales from the mountain top it had

9. The significance of Milford Haven as a site which helps produce Tudor legitimacy and as a site for potential invasion from foreign, Catholic enemies has been covered in Jones’s essay and by Garret Sullivan’s “Civilising Wales: *Cymbeline*, Roads and the Landscapes of Early Modern Britain,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2/ Special Issue 3 (1998). For a reading of the play that complicates Jones’s assertion that the play offers an uncomplicatedly sympathetic view of James’s project see Romald J. Boling, “Anglo-Welsh Relations in *Cymbeline*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000). Boling argues that Milford Haven was a much more difficult location for the Tudor and Stuart royal families to deal with; it was the site of potential rebellion and invasion as much as the site through which they gained their legitimacy.

seemed to be included within Britain, or at least it was “within a ken.” As the journey through Wales progresses, it seems an unreachable goal. Rather than being inclusive, that cartographic perspective, looking down from on top of the mountain, now seems to be alienating. The perspective of the map depends of course on your exclusion from the territory itself. It is precisely a “bird’s eye view.” In order for you to read the map successfully, however, you must attempt to place yourself, or orient yourself, within its grid of markings. If you want to use the map to travel, you have to find out where you are. This double process of alienation and inclusion is reproduced in Imogen’s inability to locate herself precisely in relation to her Welsh destination, analogous to Imogen’s position as Britain’s mistress within the perilous topographies of Wales. She is both part of the landscape, at home there, and in danger of losing her identity completely.

The doubleness of Wales in the play can be seen in its local topographies as well as its contradictory cartographies. As the cradle of legitimacy for the British royal line through the Tudors and Stuarts, and as an education in nobility for the lost sons of the King, the wild landscape has its own part in the unifying project of the play. That wildness is also shown to be potentially dangerous, however. The pastoral here is not a tame agrarian pastoral but something much more disturbing. Despite predatory bears and its isolation from the court of Sicilia, the pastoral in *The Winter’s Tale* is fairly tame stuff, whereas Wales is truly primitive. There are no shepherds here, only hunters and a setting of mountains and caves. It is the pastoral of epic romance, an amalgam of the mythic and the georgic. In practice, the castles that surround Wales in the Speed atlas had been made necessary by the danger and the inaccessibility of Welsh terrain. Even now, most people traveling through, to, and from Wales have to skirt around its edges. The harshness of the Welsh terrain may have literary precedent, but it also echoes a particularly English experience of Wales’s impenetrability.

As Phyllis Rackin points out, the Elizabethans had a contradictory image of Wales. “In addition to the liminal location at England’s geographical borders that makes Wales a constant military threat and the liminal attributes that make it psychologically disturbing, Wales also acts as the repository of true legitimacy in the person of Edmund Mortimer.”¹⁰ Terence Hawkes has also noted this doubleness in Elizabethan depictions

10. Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (London, 1990), p. 170.

of Wales. As the place of origin for the Tudor royal family, Wales and the Welsh achieved a new prestige in the sixteenth century, with many Welsh people obtaining important posts in London, the center of power. Nevertheless, Wales remains utterly foreign to the English, not least, Hawkes argues, because of its claims to occupy the same island as England. In *1 Henry IV*, this is figured in the use of the Welsh language on the London stage. "When Welsh erupts onto the stage in that play, its evident complicity with an occluded but horribly violent reading of the past, present and future is what ensures its capacity to sap the claim of English to be the transparent, fully referential transmitter of a new-minted Britishness."¹¹ Although Rackin and Hawkes are both writing about Shakespeare's earlier history plays, the doubleness that they identify continues into later Jacobean plays, perhaps with even greater intensity. After all, James's marginal ancestry was much more recent than that of Elizabeth. As daughter to Henry VIII, however illegitimate, she had achieved some measure of genealogical stability through her inclusion in Henry's "Act of Succession." James's ancestry was still suspect from an English perspective. His mother a well-known adulteress, James even had the stigma of possibly being the illegitimate son of Catholic parents. It is small wonder that he sought to justify his claims to the throne through allusions to Arthurian myth and the style of Imperial Rome. In *Cymbeline*, Wales is as disturbing and as full of danger as it is in the Elizabethan *1 Henry IV*. Just as "Britain" is born and restored in Wales, it is also brought into great peril. The troubles of Imogen, "Britain's mistress," most clearly illustrate that dynamic.

Simon Forman refers to Imogen as "Innogen," an alteration that the Oxford editors have taken on board. The thinking behind their acceptance of Forman's apparent error is that "Innogen" was the name of Brutus' wife in Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Britain's origins. If the play is somehow about "Britain," the name has a special relevance. She can be read as a personification of the idea of "Britain."¹² As well as being reunited with her brothers and her lover in Wales, she also "dies" there.

11. Terence Hawkes, "Bryn Glas" in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. A. Loomba and M. Orkin (London, 1998), p. 127.

12. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford, 1988). In the first Arden edition of the play (1903), the Irish scholar Edward Dowden draws attention to the fact that in calling her "Innogen" rather than "Imogen," Simon Forman's précis makes its "only divergence from the play as we have it." No mention is made of Forman's substitution of "Britain" with "England" for the name of Cymbeline's kingdom. It is tempting to think that this must be an ironic comment on the part of Dowden, intended to reveal that from

Posthumus Leonatus bemoans the fact that he has killed her: “Britain, I have kill’d thy mistress” (5.1.20). She is revived again, but that does not fully cancel our awareness of the perilous nature of the Welsh location. Her revival is horrific, waking up next to the headless body of Cloten, whom she presumes to be Posthumus, her husband. Here the possibilities for a tragic outcome that Shakespeare’s late romances often entertain, only to result in miraculous endings, can be used to illustrate the potential for disaster contained within the play’s idealized vision of a united Britain. If Imogen is to be taken as a metonymic representation of Britain, as “Britain’s mistress,” then her loss of identity in Wales opens up questions about the integrity of Britain as a political entity and about the ability of the term “Britain” to sustain the union that it announces.

The “Second Lord” of the play, Cloten’s sardonic associate, seems to be aware of Imogen’s status as a type of “Britannia,” and also of the danger to the idea of “Britain” posed by the plots of the play. He bewails Imogen’s situation at the hands of her father, governed by the wicked Queen, the Queen herself plotting against her, and Cloten with his unwanted attentions.

[Sec. Lor.:] The heavens hold firm
 The walls of thy dear honour, keep unshak’d
 That temple, thy fair mind, that thou mayst stand,
 T’ enjoy thy banish’d lord and this great land! (2.1.61–64)

In this prayer the final union in marriage between Posthumus and Imogen is imagined in national terms. In enjoying her lord, Britain will once again become “this great land.” Her “honour,” meanwhile, is understood in similar terms to the “sceptr’d isle” of the island nation discourse, as a temple, intact, walled in, “unshak’d.” The machinations of the plot put that integrity, both of Imogen as Britain’s mistress, and of Britain itself, under question. In Wales, Imogen loses her identity. She travels as “a franklin’s housewife” (3.2.78) and, once there, disguises herself as Fidele, a youth. In Wales, Britain is not quite herself.

Cloten is the character most obviously at peril in the Welsh mountains. His death clearly forms part of the rediscovery of the court’s legitimacy in the pastoral location. However, his vision of Wales remains a powerful one and cannot be ignored or dismissed as not in the end according with

Dublin, England and Britain do appear synonymous, but I fear that all that it actually reveals is the Anglocentric blindness built into the institution of English literature as an academic discipline.

the play's alternative vision of Wales as the cradle of legitimacy. The way in which he seems to look at Wales echoes in some important respects the way in which Wales is looked at in the play as a whole. When he thinks that he is about to kill Guiderius, one of the King's lost sons, he makes plans for his triumphant return to London.

When I have slain thee with my proper hand,
I'll follow those that even now fled hence:
And on the gates of Lud's town set your heads:
Yield, rustic mountaineer. (4.2.97–100)

Cloten sees Wales from London, even when he is there. His projected victory over the rustic cave dwellers is, as he understands it, the victory of civilization over barbarity, a barbarity constructed from Lud's town, mirroring to a large extent what is actually occurring at least in part of the staging of Wales either at the Blackfriars theater or at the Globe.¹³ This vision also accords with Imogen's sighting from the hill. It is the mark of her redemption, however, that she finds a new perspective once she goes to live in the caves and hills of Wales. Cloten is not redeemed; he dies in the landscape. In their differing fortunes lies an examination of two different versions of Britain as understood through the location of Wales—Imogen's inclusive image as opposed to the pathological insularity of Cloten's.

Welsh pastoral is not merely identified as dangerous and inaccessible. As the site for the proper raising of the two lost princes, Guiderius and Arviragus, disguised as Polydore and Cadwal, it is a location which also contains the beginnings of the new future toward which the narrative of the play reaches, beyond the conflicts of the present. Cymbeline's lost sons are brought up here to be perfect gentlemen, and their behavior is compared favorably to that of the court:

[Belarius:] O, this life
Is nobler than attending for a check:
Richer than doing nothing for a robe,
Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk. (3.3.21–24)

As in much anti-court, retirement discourse, however, what happens is the rediscovery of the court's legitimacy in the pastoral location, its supposed antithesis.

13. What is significant is the staging of Wales in London generally. I will return to the possible differences between a staging of the play at either Blackfriars or the Globe.

[Belarius:] They [Cymbeline's sons] think they are mine, and though
 train'd up thus meanly,
 I'th' cave wherein they bow, their thoughts do hit
 The roofs of palaces, and Nature prompts them
 In simple and low things to prince it, much
 Beyond the trick of others. (3.3.82–86)

The pastoral topographies are distanced from those of the court but at the same time they teach the young princes not to be savage but truly noble.

[Bel]: A goodly day not to keep house with such
 Whose roof's as low as ours! Stoop, boys: this gate
 Instructs you how t'adore the heavens; and bows you
 To a morning's holy office. The gates of monarchs
 Are arch'd so high that giants may jet through
 And keep their impious turbans on, without
 Good morrow to the sun. (3.3.1–7)

The princes' return to court and their reconciliation with the King, their father, is a narrative of a restoration of legitimacy to a kingdom that, in the persons of the Queen and Cloten, her usurping son, had lost its way. Their "origin" in Milford Haven confers on them a deeper legitimacy that links their restoration with the restoration of peace to the nation under the Tudors and the restoration of a supposed British union under James.

It is interesting to note that a parallel story of peasants coming to the rescue of the king in battle is found in Holinshed, not in the section on Cymbeline, but in Volume II of his *History of Scotland* where a ploughman and his two sons come to the aid of King Kenneth against the invading Danes: "For, as it chanced, there was in the next field at the same time an husbandman, with two of his sons busy about his work, named Hay; a man strong and stiff in making and shape of body but endued with a valiant courage. This Hay, beholding the King with the most part of the nobles fighting with great valiancy in the middleward, now destitute of the wings and in great danger to be oppressed by the great violence of his enemies, caught a ploughbeam in his hand and, with the same exhorting his sons to do the like, hasted toward the battle."¹⁴ Against all odds, Hay becomes instrumental in beating back the Danes. The pastoral location here is different from the caves and mountains of Wales. The name "Hay" and the ploughbeam place this story in the more agrarian tradition of

14. Quoted from *Shakespeare's Holinshed*, ed. Richard Hosley (New York, 1968), pp. 6–7.

pastoral. The story of Hay and the Vikings has particular relevance for James since it is part of the family legend of one Alexander Hay, the ninth Earl of Errol, one of the Catholic Northern Earls who, in 1594, rebelled against James's agreement with the Protestants. After the rebellion was quashed and a brief period of exile, Alexander Hay was reconciled to the King and the whole episode signalled a move to the kind of stability and peace-brokering that characterized James's policies in Scotland and later in the Union project.¹⁵ Another connection is that both these stories are written on the Celtic margins of "Britain." In many ways "Britain" *has* to be produced on its Celtic margins, since that is what distinguishes it from England. This is not a straightforward move, however, but one in which "Great Britaine" may become dis-located. What is included, and what is excluded, from the term "British" becomes problematic.

III. LUD'S TOWN

Cymbeline sees the peaceful unity achieved at the end of the play as justified in a final triumphant march "through Lud's town" to "the temple of great Jupiter" where "our peace we'll ratify" (5.5.482-84). As for Cloten, the mark of imperial triumph for the King is in the return from the margin to the center. This echoes the Queen's earlier celebrations of the British victories over Julius Caesar. The ancient British king Cassibelan "[m]ade Lud's town with rejoicing-fires bright," she says, "and Britons strut with courage" (3.1.33-34). An important difference is that Cymbeline is to end his victory parade at the temple of Jupiter, a Roman god. He never quite makes it back to London, however, the return to the center forever deferred. The return is postponed and, like Octavius' parading of Cleopatra at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*, is never staged. The view of Wales in the play is from London, but in the deferred victory parade this is reimagined as the ultimate inclusion of Wales within the kingdom of Great Britain. Cloten's parade is a triumph of conquest in which the defeated enemies are dragged through the streets. Cymbeline's triumph is less gladiatorial and more inclusive. This imagined return mimics James's movement from margin to center on his accession to the throne of England. These two movements produce

15. I am grateful to Mike Bath for drawing my attention to the contemporary relevance of this story beyond its resonances with the pastoral in *Cymbeline*. There is an illustration of this episode on the ceiling of the ancestral Hay home, the castle of Delgaty in Aberdeenshire, which Mike found as part of his study of the iconography of ceilings in Scottish castles.

the Celtic margins as alien, but also as a source of legitimacy, locating Britain not in the island but in a constant shift of emphasis *within* the island. The legitimacy of the crown is projected onto this faraway land even as that land is constructed as perilously alien. This doubleness haunts the reconciliation of the legitimate ruler with his land.

The projected return to the ceremonial stage of London at the end of the play may be of particular relevance to a staging of the play at the Blackfriars theater, itself located within the city walls behind St. Paul's, the finishing post of any royal triumph through the city and a location that finds its analogue in "the temple of great Jupiter" in the play. The location of the Blackfriars would match the location of any projected triumph through the streets of Lud's town. The Globe's staging of the play may have involved a different perspective on the relationship between margin and center, since it was located on the margins of London. As Steven Mullaney has pointed out, in staging the exotic "other" and marking the limits and boundaries of state power, the popular stage fascinated the public. Mullaney's analysis of *Macbeth*, *1 and 2 Henry IV*, and *Measure for Measure* can be extended to include *Cymbeline*. "These are critical histories of the contemporaneous moment, anamorphic genealogies of power: they need to be viewed from more than one perspective and cannot be comprehended from any single vantage point, no matter how privileged or dominant."¹⁶ Although Wales is looked at from London, it is an anamorphic perspective that fails to locate its object in one single view. The constant travelling from margin to center in the construction of a "Great Britaine" blurs the easy distinction between them. Just as Wales has difficulty being included within "Britain," so the critical position of the public theaters on the south bank of the Thames was not wholly in accord with a centralized Jacobean order. Like Wales itself, the south bank was a marginal location, included and excluded at the same time. The Globe may share the more difficult perspectives of Imogen and the two princes—all of them both lost and found in the Welsh landscape.¹⁷ To look at Wales from Blackfriars, by

16. Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago, 1988), p. 129.

17. I am assuming that the play could have been performed at both these locations. While it is not entirely true that Blackfriars only offered drama that accorded with an official court line, and that at times plays at Blackfriars could offer critical perspectives on the court's behavior, it is nonetheless true that both in terms of its location within the political geographies of London and in its institutional proximity to the court a performance of *Cymbeline* would offer a slightly less oblique angle of vision of James's projects for union.

contrast, one might look with the eyes of Cloten—a more straightforward binary relation of same and other.

IV. ROME AND ITALY

In *James I and the Politics of Literature*, Jonathan Goldberg sees *Cymbeline* as the dramatic epitome of Stuart dreams of absolutism and of peaceful union. *Cymbeline* comes almost to be a precursor to Charles I's program for the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall in which Roman gods and goddesses join ancient Britons in a celebration of James's peaceful reign.¹⁸ Although Goldberg is careful to point out that the play does not share the same aims as the ceiling, he does emphasize the culmination of the play in the word "peace," choosing to end his own book about the Jacobean Roman style of kings with this last speech in *Cymbeline*. Of the play's resolution he writes, "the Italianate machinations of Iachimo and the primitivistic retreat of the king's sons in Wales are encountered and subsumed in the figure of Imogen, who bears the name of Brute's wife."¹⁹ While Imogen functions as a focus for unity, and her name is no coincidence, at certain moments the disturbances within the Jacobean project are revealed in the play, notably in the relationship between Wales and a larger "Britain" as it relates to the ideological geography of the nation as an island. This can also be seen in the play's use of its two other "locations"—ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy.

In *Cymbeline* the Romans are rarely presented as they are in the more obviously Roman plays of Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights—as a masculinist political community with high ideals, embodying the heights of militaristic virtue and gravitas. This role is rather taken on by the virtuous British characters: the two lost princes, Guiderius and Arviragus, and, when he is not being influenced by the machinations of foreigners, Posthumus. The dominant image of the Roman characters onstage in *Cymbeline* is of a community with loose morals, a nation of idlers and of philanderers.²⁰ The obvious exception to this is Caius

18. Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore, 1983), pp. 240–41.

19. Goldberg, p. 240.

20. There is just one scene set in a recognizably Roman location, and the authenticity of that scene (3.8) is strongly disputed. It is set in what the stage directions call "a public place," as opposed to the private location that features in the previous Roman scenes, Philario's house. The public virtues associated with Romanness do not flourish in the domestic situation, but in the senate. Even in the one public Roman scene of the play we are not witnessing the masculinist,

Lucius, the Roman General. It seems that “Romanness” (*romanitas*) can only be achieved in “Britain.” When Leonatus leaves Britain for ancient Rome, he arrives in Renaissance Italy instead. As in contemporary prose fiction, Italy is perceived as a land where the virtuous Englishman may get into all sorts of trouble at the hands of unscrupulous foreigners, as Leonatus does. He is all too easily persuaded into the highly suspect game set up to test Imogen’s virtue. His Roman virtue and status as a latter-day Aeneas are abandoned in the heat of the moment, and in the dissolute climate of contemporary Italy.²¹

This contrast between the ancient and the modern in the portrayal of the Romans in the play serves to develop further the ironies in the play’s development of a British imperial nationalism. It certainly disturbs an easy containment of Rome within “Britaine.” It reveals that the inclusion of Rome within British nationalism is not an open internationalism—a masculine embrace of a brother nation—but something that may even be resistant to a contemporary involvement with foreign countries. The divergence between the image of Roman imperialism and the “real” Italians encountered in the machinations of the plot highlights Britain’s contemporary self-reliance. When the Romans in *Cymbeline* arrive in Britain, they are, with the exception of Philario, more Roman than they are in Italy. Philario continues to act like a character out of Italianate fiction. Roman history is a British rather than an international history. The contrast between the main plot of the play, in which two noble nations do battle and eventually come to terms, and the play’s subplot of intrigue and sexual betrayal is part of the translation of empire which the play attempts to portray, with Britain as the new Hesperides, the destination of Aeneas. The plots intermingle, however, and the character of Posthumus illustrates the easy elision between ancient Rome and contemporary Italy. His Romano-British virtue is all too easily brought down in the modern world of lax morality and factious nationalism. The context for his acceptance of Philario’s challenge is a nationalist argument among a Spaniard, a Frenchman, a Dutchman, two Italians

agonistic discourse of the virtuous republic, but the senate under the emperor Augustus, a willing and obedient servant: “We will discharge our duty,” as the third tribune says (3.8.16). Perhaps the masculinist values are transferred in *Cymbeline* to the caves of Wales, the scene of Belarius’ stoic and righteous dissent against Cymbeline’s heavy handedness (3.3.65–107) and of the male bonding between Imogen, as the male Fidele, and Guiderius and Arviragus.

21. For a discussion of Posthumus as a “type” of latter-day Aeneas, see Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge, Eng., 1997).

and himself. If James's policies are associated with the move toward an inclusive imperialist Britishness in the play, then that move and those policies are shown to be in grave danger when they come across the real world of belligerent contemporary Europe. In some way this echoes James's real foreign policies, which sought to broker a peace between the several nations in continental Europe, but which were often coming unstuck when faced with the harsh realities of Europe's emerging nation-states.

What this anachronistic portrayal of the Romans also manages to reveal is that this Romano-British heritage is not real, that the "Roman" is a discursive construct which does not necessarily refer to any "real" Rome but to an English/British imperialism that is filtered through Rome. In turn, an awareness of this anachronism tends to render any identification of Britain with the inheritance of the *translatio imperii* as necessarily unable to escape an ironic subtext. Rackin has written of the anachronism in Shakespeare's English chronicle plays that "any invocation of the present in a history play tends to create radical dislocations: it invades the time-frame of the audience, and its effect is no less striking than that of a character stepping off the stage to invade the audience's physical space or addressing them directly to invade their psychological space."²² The idea of history as a linear narrative is destroyed by the presence of anachronism within that narrative. What is revealed in place of this illusion of accuracy, created by a linear history, is history as discourse. The Renaissance Italians in *Cymbeline* reveal that the (British) Roman history that the Jacobean project of union would wish to see inscribed on the space of the nation is not a real history but a history being staged. Anachronism here functions as a Brechtian moment in which the stage is revealed as a construction of the past rather than an accurate record of it.

In the final scene the soothsayer places Britain and Cymbeline in a geographical context as "the radiant Cymbeline, / Which shines here in the west" (5.5.476–77). But this is the geography of the island nation, the Vergilian "*et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos*," the British "Empire" encompassed within the wingspan of the Roman Imperial Eagle. In the relationship between Britain and Wales the space of the nation as "Great Britain" is produced on the margins; similarly, it is deferred onto an ancient Rome that is revealed as non-existent. "Great Britain" again

22. Rackin, p. 94.

produces itself in a location that is both liminal and revealed as purely discursive. This discursivity destabilizes the production of the nation-space in its island geography. Its location within the island is produced within discourse, not on a real piece of land. Like Imogen looking down on Wales from the top of a mountain, we are unable to see exactly where Britain is in the play, and to comprehend how to reach such a place, with or without the aid of a map.

IV

It is difficult to speculate on the precise ideological locations of this Shakespeare play, or on those of the institution of the theater and the King's Men in particular, in relation to the Jamesian project of union. *Cymbeline* clearly plays its part in this project, bringing to light the British past of the nation, rediscovering roots for the union project in older stories. However, once it brings these older histories to light, they do not coincide comfortably with James's desire for an imperial nation reborn. The romance genre would seem to be a perfect vehicle for such royalist purposes, and *Cymbeline* clearly announces itself as a romance. At the start of the play the doctor, Cornelius, is commissioned by the Queen to make some poison. In an aside he tells the audience that, not trusting her motives, he has made something that will seem fatal but will not kill those who drink it. This is what Imogen takes as Fidele, so that the two princes assume that she is dead. In describing the effects of the potion, Cornelius gives a classic definition of Shakespearean romance:

there is
 No danger in what show of death it makes,
 More than the locking up the spirits a time,
 To be more fresh, reviving. (1.6.39–42)

The processes of renewal and revival, of recognition and remembrance, in which all of Shakespeare's late plays are involved, are here prefigured by Cornelius, and ultimately worked out in the narrative just as he predicts. Britain is rendered whole again; the main players in the royal drama are to return to the ceremonial center, London, away from the dangers of Wales; Rome is both defeated and incorporated into the newly peaceful nation. However, along the way, we have been made aware that it is possible to tell different stories about Britain which do not sit so comfortably within this translation of empire, and that the space of

the nation is not necessarily left intact in this resurrection of the name of “Britain.” However revived she is feeling after her exploits, Imogen never does make it back to London from Milford Haven.²³

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23. I would like to thank Alison Thorne for her help with this essay.