

Shakespeare Performed

“What world is this?”: *Pericles* at the Stratford Festival of Canada, 2003

MARGARET JANE KIDNIE

One entered the Festival Theatre at Stratford, Ontario, to see the large thrust stage swathed in billowing white silk. Two nets, narrowing toward the top, were fixed against the walls by the upstage left and right exits, and narrow rope ladders, likewise suggestive of ships and voyages, stretched from the same exits to the ceiling over centerstage. The play was *Pericles*—billed in this production as *The Adventures of Pericles*, perhaps with a nod to the George Wilkins novella of 1608, or perhaps in order to summon up memories of fantasy and exploit associated with tales of King Arthur and Aladdin. The designer, John Pennoyer, described the stage as a “moonscape” or “blank screen,”¹ but to some spectators it evoked a huge expanse of gently moving water. A tall, narrow column of white fabric upstage center drew one’s eye from the undulating floor to the huge golden crown suspended high above the stage. As people found their way to their seats, the theater was filled with Bruce Gaston’s richly layered and haunting music, vaguely New Age in feel, over which were patterned the sound of lapping water and a low, chanting female voice. The house lights darkened; a tight white spot picked out a space centerstage; and Gower (Thom Marriott), rising through a trapdoor, ripped through the billowing floor—born once again into our world. Standing half in, half out of the trap, covered in white body paint, naked apart from a white loincloth, he met our gaze, seeming nothing so much as an extension of the otherworldly stage.

All modern productions of *Pericles* are challenged to find suitable, and suitably resonant, cultural and performance traditions within which to locate the figure of Gower. This Gower, with his shaved head, white-painted body, and red-rimmed eyes, was reminiscent of the conventions popularly associated with *butoh*, a transgressive, postmodern performance style developed by Tatsumi Hijikata in Japan in the 1970s.² Marriott

I am grateful to Leon Rubin for giving his time to discuss with me some of the directorial decisions that shaped *The Adventures of Pericles*, and to the Stratford Festival of Canada for inviting me to serve as Visiting Scholar during the 2003 season. I would especially like to thank Antoni Cimolino, Jane Edmonds, Anita Gaffney, and Pat Quigley, all of the Stratford Festival, for their generous support and assistance. This paper further benefited from the insights and comments provided by participants in the Western Early Modern Society at the University of Western Ontario in November 2003.

¹ John Pennoyer, program notes for *The Adventures of Pericles*, dir. Leon Rubin, Stratford Festival of Canada, Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario (24 May–31 October 2003), 11.

² For information on the *butoh* performance style, see Bonnie Sue Stein, “*Butoh*: ‘Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty, and Mad,’” *The Drama Review* 30 (1986): 107–25, esp. 110–11.

moved with a dancer's grace and elegance, but his tall, fleshy body (typical of the untypical bodies of *butoh*) made no attempt to conceal "man's infirmities" (1.3).³ Occasionally, especially during his longer narrative monologues, Gower was flanked by two female attendants (Jodi-Lynn McFadden and Anne Marie Ramos) dressed in flowing white trousers and tops, who accompanied his words with stylized movement and song (see Figure 1). *Butoh*, a type of dance through which, as Hijikata explains, "something can be born, can appear, living and dying at the same moment," speaks in obvious ways to the similarly liminal Gower.⁴ But forced to accommodate the heightened verse and dense plot structure of early modern drama, the form here was inevitably emptied of its radical, nonconformist edge. Instead, the trappings of *butoh* functioned in this production as style notes that, in combination with the stage design and Marriott's remarkable verbal dexterity, served to enhance Gower's ethereal strangeness.

"To sing a song that old was sung / From ashes ancient Gower is come" (1.1–2). This ancient figure wove in and through *The Adventures of Pericles*, commenting on and shaping the other characters' fortunes with a delicacy and artistry similar to—and at a similar remove from—his manipulation of the small marionettes of Pericles and Thaisa, which he made embrace, mourn, and pray during his monologue in Scene 15 (ll. 1–52), which opened the second half of this show. The stark lighting design for the Gower scenes—a circular pattern of round white spots which resolved with the entrance of other characters to a general wash or hard blocks of light—reinforced this character's ability to be part of the action yet always slightly aloof from it. In Scene 10, wearing a flowing, open white gown over his loincloth, Gower crouched alone at centerstage, half whispering, half singing, of the quiet night and sleeping household at Pentapolis. He retired to the steps upstage right to watch the dumb show of the messenger from Tyre, stepping forward in its closing moments to intercept the letter from the exiting Simonides. As he read to us of Helicanus's refusal to assume the "crown of Tyre" (l. 28), Gower, chameleon-like, knelt by the upstage-center column, blending into the set, while the lords of Tyre entered to play a transposed Scene 8. Still unseen, he slipped into the center of a circle of lords a moment before they dispersed, picking up Scene 10 by recapping their exchange in a slightly cut version that invested his commentary with a sense of his own surprise and shock: "if King Pericles / Come not home in twice six moons / He, obedient to their dooms, / Will take the crown. . . . / 'Who dreamt, who thought of such a thing?'" (ll. 30–38). This fast-paced rearrangement of the text broke up Gower's long monologue, allowed him to clarify and explain the Tyrian lords' deliberations immediately after they took place, and created a reading of Gower not as fully in control of but, rather, creatively responsive to the unfolding action. As the stage emptied of actors after the final scene, the set returned to the neutral locale of the play's opening, with its billowing floor and dim lighting. With the words "Here our play has ending" (22.125), the circular pattern of

³ Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of *Pericles* in this essay follow *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

⁴ Tatsumi Hijikata, quoted here from Stein, 125.



Figure 1: Gower (Thom Marriott) and his attendants (Jodi-Lynn McFadden and Anne Marie Ramos). Reproduced courtesy of the Stratford Festival of Canada.

round spots surrounding Gower converged on the trap as it descended one last time, swallowing up the expanse of silk and Gower with it, his mouth open in a silent scream, his arms straining above his head.

The Adventures of Pericles was the unexpected hit of the 2003 Stratford season. An episodic, collaborative, relatively unknown, and textually nightmarish script, *Pericles* is approached with caution by critics and editors alike—Walter Cohen has called it “the play from hell,” while Philip Edwards suggests that the “remarkable beauty” of Shakespeare’s “encrusted and deformed” play can be recovered today only in performance.⁵ The text used for the Stratford production was shaped and lightly cut: a half-line—“I shall test him first”—was added at 9.21, clarifying Simonides’s otherwise bizarre treatment of Pericles after the other knights’ departure; some of the language in the brothel scenes was modernized; and the mottos on the knights’ shields were read by Thaisa in translation. Leon Rubin, the production’s British director, also fleshed out the speeches of Thaisa (Karen Ancheta) and Marina (Nazneen Contractor), strengthening the impact of these female characters: Thaisa’s disobedience to her father in Scene 9 followed the Oxford reconstructed version, while Marina’s commanding defense of her virginity against Lysimachus in Scene 19 was an arrangement unique to this production.

Perhaps most remarkable about *The Adventures of Pericles*, however, was the creativity with which Rubin used the Festival Theatre space, particularly in the way the spectator’s eye was continually drawn along the vertical axis. As Gower painted a verbal picture of tempestuous seas in Scene 5, the lights lowered, the sound of rising winds and thunder built, and two swaying sailors centerstage made to billow a large sheet of white cloth—a sail—that thrust out from the tall column. Pericles climbed to the top of a rope ladder that hung from the ceiling just right of centerstage to cry out against the “angry stars of heaven” (5.41–44). At this, the thunder cracked; a strobe effect created the illusion of lightning; and Pericles, supported by an unseen harness, fell in slow motion to the stage below. Gower, delivering the last four lines of his speech, “[t]hrew him ashore” (l. 38) with a wave of his hand. This caused Pericles to roll far stage right where he lay, exhausted, wishing for “death in peace” (l. 51).

Despite such striking effects, key scenes seemed flat early in the run. This may have been a result of the play’s difficulty and of severe rehearsal constraints in a short summer season that compressed sixteen productions in four theaters between the end of May and the middle of August. The show matured over the summer, however, as the actors continued to explore the play’s challenges and devised more nuanced interplay between the script’s comic and tragic elements. The broad humor of the potentially dark brothel scenes, jarring in the earliest performances, connected more firmly to the whole production as actors grew more confident, slipping into a heightened, self-conscious theatricality. Goad developed in the closing scenes a constantly shifting movement between comedy and wonder. A trick of his voice and movement of his head, car-

⁵ Walter Cohen, introduction to *Pericles* in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 2709; Philip Edwards, ed., *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 8.

ried over from the first half of the play (when, for instance, clearly and comically out of his depth with Antiochus's daughter), released audience laughter but in a way that reinforced the emotional power of the family reunion.

The force of his eventual recovery of Marina was deepened through music. In a stripped-down version of the Oxford edition's reconstructed Scene 8a, Pericles passed the night after Thaisa's birthday festivities in song. The tune was simple and strong, the lyrics concerned high birth and adverse fortunes, and Goad sang it *a cappella*, standing alone downstage right on a dimly lit stage. The tune recurred at Ephesus after the death of Thaisa, Cerimon (Wayne Sujo) singing it to the letter that Pericles placed in his dead wife's coffin. By the time it was heard the third time, from Marina as she sang aboard ship to the stranger-king of her own high birth and misadventures, the tune spoke powerfully to the experiences of Pericles and his lost and wandering family. Pericles's song—now Marina's song—jarred the king out of his stupor and set in motion the series of questions that ultimately brought him back to his daughter.

This story of family reunion told by the otherworldly Gower "[t]o glad your ear and please your eyes" (1.4) was located in faraway lands from a time long ago. Rubin transposed and extended Pericles's journeys, originally along the eastern and northern Mediterranean coast to Arabia and India, to the far East. Stratford's thrust stage with its 175-degree playing circle does not easily admit elaborate sets, and in this production a sense of constantly changing locale was suggested primarily through costuming. Pentapolis, where the members of Simonides's court dressed in kimonos and geta sandals, was Japanese, while the bare-chested men wearing white turbans and off-white lengths of cloth wrapped around their waists visually located Ephesus in Indonesia. Female actors draped head to foot in black chadors or burqas with full-face veils, and male actors dressed in kaffiyehs and loose robes with dark cloaks, belted and trimmed with heavy embroidery, created Antioch as a blend of Arab influences. A sense of localized space was further evoked by a series of place-specific banners, sails, flower garlands, and brightly tasselled ornaments hoisted by means of pulleys from one or more of the four entrances toward the central golden crown. Other clues to our shifting whereabouts were provided by movable props such as a hookah in Antioch, a market stall in Thai Mytilene, and hand-held fans for the geishas in Pentapolis.

The emphasis in these scenes was on color and spectacle, as each new setting evoked a distinct culture with its own traditions and apparel. As the sudden emergence of Gower's nearly naked, painted body drew our curious gaze in the opening moments of the production, so the actorly bodies on display in Tarsus, Ephesus, and Antioch likewise seemed to invite curiosity and to reward close scrutiny. As Cleon (Stephen Russell) and his wife (Brigit Wilson) brought their palms together in a praying gesture, bowing their heads and welcoming Pericles to Tarsus with the Hindi greeting "Namaste," one noticed that the tips of Dionyza's fingers were stained with henna. Thaisa's forehead in a narrow strip around the hairline was dyed a golden yellow, shading into pale red. Antiochus's body, too, was marked, his bald head covered with a striking and intricate black tattoo.

One read these bodies, and one also read how these bodies moved. Cerimon told an attendant to "Fetch hither all the people in the village," thus summoning up his local

community rather than, as the line reads in the quarto text, “all my boxes in my closet” (12.79). What followed, in an extended interpretation of the quarto stage direction “Enter one with Napkins and Fire,” was a version of the *sanghyang dedari*, a Balinese healing ritual. Drums beat, fires flickered, male actors—either seated or moving in a circle around Thaisa’s open coffin at centerstage—chanted the distinctive *kechak-kechak* chorus, and two women fell backward in a trance, their dancing bodies evidently taken over by the goddess. One of the possessed women was lifted and placed, writhing sinuously, on a male actor’s shoulders; other actors tumbled and cartwheeled around the dancing figures; and at the climax and conclusion of the ceremony, three actors holding torches stood centerstage and released a burst of fire over the audience. As Cerimon cried “This queen will live.” (l. 90), the exhausted and prostrate Bali-Ephesians began to chant “Live! Live! Live!” and Ancheta’s Thaisa sat up to look around her in wonder. This stunning display of music and choreography, influenced in some of its key details by a ritual probably unknown to many in the Stratford audience, foregrounded the interpretive, readerly process by which these performing, ethnically marked bodies acquired specific meanings in relation to Thaisa’s magical return from the dead.

Dance and music recurred in this production. In an earlier scene Antiochus’s daughter (Lindsay Clarke)—costumed in diaphanous veils, a flesh-colored thong, ankle bracelet, and sequined bra—occupied centerstage in an erotic dance of veils before turning to fondle and kiss her father (Anthony Malarky), while Pericles moved downstage to apostrophize about incest. But even less overtly spectacular moments prompted a reading of bodies and their behaviors. Our eyes were drawn throughout the whole of this same scene, for instance, to the veiled and kaftaned courtiers of Antioch, lounging in pairs on scattered floor pillows around the outer perimeter of the stage, stroking each other’s bodies. A sense of indolence and luxury, tightly linked through plot and costuming to both incest and the legendary world of the *Arabian Nights*, was then further overlaid with physical danger. In direct contrast to the later moment of Thaisa’s salvation at the hands of a very different community, these reclining figures began to shout “Kill! Kill! Kill!” when Pericles refused to offer a direct answer to Antiochus’s riddle. In this court, as was suggested by the previous suitors’ decomposing heads, Pericles’s difficulty was not to discern moral corruption but to escape from the encounter alive.

The arrangement of the Festival Stage for the scene at Antioch was visually repeated three scenes later when the action shifted to Tarsus. Once again the stage was draped with actors, but this time, wrapped head to foot in earth-toned rags, they lay huddled and starving. When Cleon grieved that mothers are ready “[t]o eat those little darlings whom they loved” (4.44), one of these faceless bodies reached toward a baby held in another’s arms. Here, the prostrate body, whether as a consequence of debauchery or privation, was simultaneously an abject body. Tyre, the city over which Pericles ruled, was sharply distinguished visually from both Antioch and Tarsus. The white, textured stage was brightly lit, and Pericles entered with half a dozen lords, all dressed in simple white togas and sandals, their unadorned faces and heads plainly visible. The set, softened in other scenes with pillows or reclining actors, here showed its sharp edges and metal detailing, creating an almost geometric effect. The only prop, situated upstage center, was a shoulder-high, off-white marble fragment of two human eyes from a Greek frieze. Whereas the play’s other locales were situated east of the Mediterranean, Tyre, though

historically located in modern-day Lebanon, was here relocated to ancient Greece, the birthplace of Western philosophy.⁶ The huge marble eyes staring out at us, emblematic of reason and the search for truth, stood in striking juxtaposition to the blind eyes of the murdered princes whose dismembered heads hung from the flies in Antioch.

The Adventures of Pericles told its audience a story about self and the foreign other. The neutral body was defined by the white male courtiers of this Greek Tyre, the place Pericles called home, and this body functioned as the normative perspective—the constructed I/eye—through which we read the exotic, often dangerous markings of race, gender, and ethnicity. How differently the signs of this production would function if one recognized as “home” not Western Tyre but Asian Pentapolis or Indian Tarsus. Like Holbein’s portrait *The Ambassadors*, the force of this production’s spectacle only snapped into focus if viewed from a certain angle, from a particular (cultural) standpoint. Pennoyer’s program notes explain that these locales are sixteenth-century in design,⁷ but these bodies wouldn’t stay fixed in their historical past, slipping, insistently, into a contemporary present. Indeed, this attempt to locate the events of the play not just “long ago” but “far away” showed compellingly how in performance an idea of “history” can be conveyed and received only theatrically: by way of modern behaviors and “theatrical regimes that seem to make [the text] meaningfully performable,” and through interpretive filters shaped by twenty-first-century geopolitics.⁸

Rubin has stated that “no powerful reason” informed the production’s locations, but his choices nonetheless registered in quite specific, and specifically modern, ways.⁹ Tarsus, for instance, was set on the Indian Subcontinent in order to suggest a place with “a glorious past” but “famine-destroyed present.”¹⁰ When Pericles entered in Scene 4 to the starving Indian-Tarsians, himself draped in a floor-length cloak of glittering golden cloth and leading a convoy of Tyrians bearing jugs of water and baskets of food, the visual dynamics of the stage were coded in terms of emergency relief. This intercultural exchange, figured here explicitly as an encounter between East and West, resonated with assumptions about relative wealth and power in a modern global economy. By contrast, the *sanghyang dedari* trance dance reenacted at Bali-Ephesus, a ritual closed to travelers but regularly staged by tour agents as a form of cultural performance for curious visitors, constructed the Stratford audience as tourists, passive consumers of an exotic spectacle. Sex tourism—a different type of holiday junket—was the implicit context

⁶ The production’s treatment of ancient Greece as the foundation of Western civilization, untouched by Afroasiatic influence, was consistent with the Aryan or European model of Greek history, dominant in classical studies since the early-nineteenth century. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, this model has come under intensive scrutiny and attack by revisionist scholars who argue that the Egyptians and Phoenicians significantly shaped the formation of Greek culture and language. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987–91); *Black Athena Revisited*, Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996); and Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to his Critics*, ed. David Chioni Moore (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001).

⁷ Pennoyer, 11.

⁸ W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 58.

⁹ Leon Rubin, e-mail message to author, September 2003.

¹⁰ Rubin, e-mail message to author, September 2003.

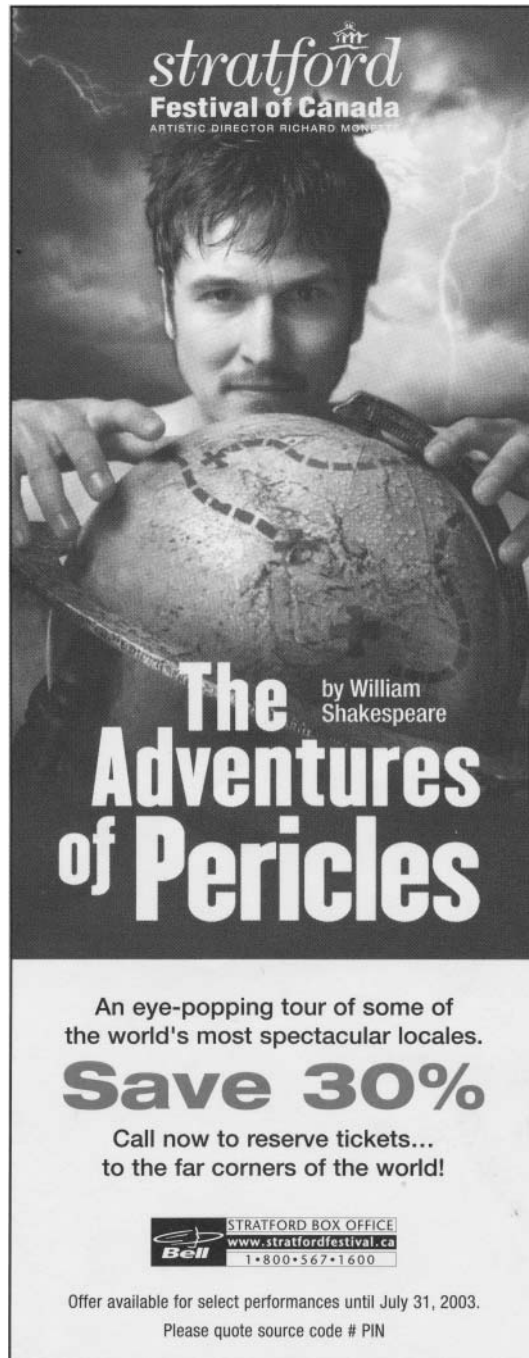
that “made sense” of Thailand as a meaningful analogue for Mytilene. The male and female sex workers in the brothel scenes—exploited, diseased, unregulated, and, at least in Marina’s case, under-age—exhibited bodies and behaviors that might, feasibly, be historical but which were also certainly, and more relevantly, of our own time.

The idea that *The Adventures of Pericles* situated the spectator as tourist was reinforced by the way this unfamiliar late play was advertised to potential Stratford patrons. Underneath a photograph of Jonathan Goad staring grimly at the viewer, his hands poised over a globe as though to grasp, god-like, the lands it maps, ran the caption “An eye-popping tour of some of the world’s most spectacular locales. Save 30%. Call now to reserve tickets . . . to the far corners of the world!” (see Figure 2). Although the details of the intercultural exchanges at Ephesus and Mytilene were by no means the same, and while both of these episodes differed hugely from the East-West relations established in Tarsus, all of these encounters were interpreted in live performance not through unknown, five-hundred-year-old customs but instead through a knowledge of how international currencies circulate in our own century. To shift from world economics to world religions, and to consider once again those marked, turbaned, and veiled bodies in Antioch, one can only conjecture how this spectacle, familiar to Westerners through the folktales of the *Arabian Nights* but also, perhaps, encoding the signs of modern-day Islam, shaped Gower’s story of a murderous tyrant for today’s Canadian and American audiences.

Pentapolis, like the other Asian city-states encountered in *The Adventures of Pericles*, was filled with spectacle. Geishas ceremoniously distributed small cups of sake on trays and gathered on either side of Thaisa to perform a fan dance—sensual entertainment with a grace and deliberate formality that begged comparison to the lithe and swirling dance of veils performed in an earlier scene by Antiochus’s daughter. The knights—not from Mediterranean states but from “the North,” “the South,” and one “Mongolian”—entered costumed in rich, brightly colored, and bejewelled attire, wearing distinctive headdresses and carrying elaborate ornamental fans and flags on their backs (see Figure 3).

Pericles, as his costuming and somewhat awkward manner made apparent, was a stranger to Simonides’s land. However, this extended passage of action made it equally obvious that there were enough affinities between his “education . . . in arts and arms” (7.77) and the orderly codes of honor and chivalry found at Japanese Pentapolis for the unknown gentleman not merely to assert a place for himself in this court but to excel where others, native to the customs, failed. His comment that “Yon king’s to me like to my father’s picture” (l. 36), delivered downstage center and directed to the audience, functioned here as a moment of adopted cultural, as well as adopted ancestral, identification, blurring a previously firm demarcation between East and West.

“What world is this?” Thaisa cries in Scene 12 (l. 103) as she awakens from death to find herself surrounded by unfamiliar faces. Two scenes later Thaisa assumes a place and an identity within that world, no longer a stranger yet not entirely of the community, either. Thaisa’s situation, the stranger who comments on the Ephesians’ strangeness from the perspective of a different home, might stand as an emblem of the tangled, ever-shifting dynamics at play in the study of intercultural performance. Home to



stratford
Festival of Canada
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR RICHARD MONTELEONE


by William Shakespeare

The Adventures of Pericles

An eye-popping tour of some of the world's most spectacular locales.

Save 30%

Call now to reserve tickets...
to the far corners of the world!

 STRATFORD BOX OFFICE
www.stratfordfestival.ca
1-800-567-1600

Offer available for select performances until July 31, 2003.
Please quote source code # PIN

Figure 2: Advertisement for the Stratford Festival's summer 2003 production of *The Adventures of Pericles*.



Figure 3: The court of Simonides (Scene 6) with, from left to right, Cerimon (Wayne Sujo), attendants (Lindsay Clarke and Sarah McVie), Pericles (Jonathan Goad), Thaisa (Karen Ancheta), Simonides (Charles Azulay), and knights (Robert Hamilton and Caleb Marshall). Reproduced courtesy of the Stratford Festival of Canada.

whom? Strange(r) to whom? Rubin, who spends much of his time living and working in Southeast Asia, brought to this production of *Pericles* rich traditions of performance, making a difficult script come alive. He also achieved the important goal of casting actors of color in major roles, thus beginning to redress casting practices for which the Stratford Festival has in years past been sharply criticized.¹¹

However, cued from the earliest scenes to read the set and body for clues, one noticed when the signs seemed confused—when the *kechak* chorus in Ephesus or the kimonoed court in Pentapolis, for instance, seemed not Indonesian or Japanese but European or, equally distracting, African. In such instances, these bodies, so heavily overdetermined in terms of race and ethnicity, produced miscues, and took on significance not in terms of fictional space but in terms of the Festival's implicit production values and resources. Nazneen Contractor's tiny but strident Marina, for example, costumed in azure blue throughout as though to evoke her name and birth at sea, took after her mother only in height, strength of character, and articulateness. Charles Azulay, who played King Simonides with confidence, was likewise not only not of Japanese descent but looked about the same age as his daughter, Thaisa. Azulay's other major role this season was that of Lun Tha, Tuptim's young lover in *The King and I*, a pairing that led one to infer the strain of heavy cross-casting between these two main-house "Asian" productions.¹² In these and similar cases the spectator had to abandon a careful scanning of the body for clues to locale and instead settle on an imprecise binarism between "familiar" and "foreign," self and other.

A concept may have seemed necessary to justify the multiracial cast of *The Adventures of Pericles*. So-called "colorblind casting" is at the heart of a contested theoretical debate, some critics objecting that race on the modern stage is never invisible, others arguing that it tends to require actors, regardless of their racial and cultural backgrounds, to conform to a particular, supposedly "neutral" accent and style of delivery.¹³ That said, it also allows talented black actors such as Ray Fearon (Romeo in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1997 production of *Romeo and Juliet* and the eponymous hero in the same company's 2002 production of *Pericles*) and Adrian Lester (Rosalind in Cheek by Jowl's groundbreaking 1991 production of *As You Like It* and the English king in the Royal National Theatre's 2003 production of *Henry V*) to play lead roles once

¹¹ Rubin explains: "I decided early on to locate the play mainly in the Far East and I insisted that appropriate actors would be cast. . . . I wanted to use a richly multiculturally-influenced cast with diverse looks and cultural roots. I feel Stratford should be doing this" (e-mail message to author, September 2003). See also Celia R. Daileader, "Casting black actors: beyond Othellophilia," *Shakespeare and Race*, Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 177–202, esp. 179; and Gary Taylor, "Theatrical Proximities: The Stratford Festival 1998," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999): 334–54, esp. 342.

¹² Ten of the twenty-seven actors in *The Adventures of Pericles* also appeared in *The King and I* (the only other show in which these ten were cast). The remaining twenty-two performers in *The King and I*, a number that excludes the small children who played princes and princesses, were not cast in any other Stratford production.

¹³ See Denise Albanese, "Black and White, and Dread All Over: The Shakespeare Theater's 'Photonegative' *Othello* and the Body of Desdemona," *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, Dymphna Callaghan, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 226–47, esp. 229–30; Daileader, *passim*; and Worthen, 118–22.

reserved exclusively for white actors.¹⁴ The conception shaping the exotic, marked body in this Ontario production, by contrast, presented a stereotyped and imprecisely executed treatment of race and culture that did little to challenge assumptions that the “real” Shakespearean body is white and of European (preferably British) descent.

Curiously, however, if one looked across town to the Studio Theatre, the Festival’s newest and smallest space,¹⁵ one encountered a notably different aesthetic. In the 2003 season, in addition to a new Canadian play written and directed by Peter Hinton called *The Swanne: Princess Charlotte (The Acts of Venus)*, the Studio offered three classic plays based on the House of Atreus myth: Ted Hughes’s translation of Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*, directed by David Latham; Jean Giraudoux’s *Electra*, also directed by Leon Rubin; and Jean-Paul Sartre’s *The Flies*, directed by Peter Lichtenfels. These productions drew on a racially and culturally diverse company, neither ignoring that diversity nor making it a determining feature.¹⁶ Sometimes race was dramatically significant, as in *The Swanne*, which explicitly addresses miscegenation; a white actor (Julia Donovan) was cast in the part of Princess Charlotte of Coburg, and black actors were cast in the parts of John Stowe (Dion Johnstone) and the illegitimate child, William (Sean Olagunju). Sometimes, however, skin color was not crucial to plot, and then Canadian and American actors of any number of racial and cultural descents (Afro-Caribbean, Greek, Middle Eastern, British) played alongside one another. This isn’t to say, necessarily, that race was invisible but merely to point out that there was no easily discernible metanarrative of race informing the Studio casting in 2003. One thinks, for instance, of Karen Robinson’s outstanding black Clytemnestra opposite Scott Wentworth’s white Aegisthus in the House of Atreus series; of Steve Cumyn’s eerie trickster Jupiter in *The Flies* and his nuanced portrayal in *The Swanne* of Queer Rue, a (white) transvestite prostitute; of Rami Posner’s vulnerably comic Gardener in *Electra*; of Sarah Dodd’s white Electra and Dion Johnstone’s black Orestes; of the way Maria Vaccratsis, playing the First Erinye in *The Flies*, offered Electra pain like a love letter; and of Walter Borden’s irresistible and superbly detailed presence at the emotional and physical center of the Chorus of Elders in *Agamemnon*, a role delivered with this black actor’s distinctive West Indian accent.

To put this another way, Studio and main-house audiences were primed differently in terms of how to read actors’ bodies. In the former space, race was sometimes mean-

¹⁴ Peter Holland argues that this by-now-commonplace practice has had the effect in Britain of making an “actor’s skin colour . . . unimportant”: “Companies like the RSC now regularly include black actors. . . . We have grown used to seeing siblings of different colour so that Cheek by Jowl’s *Measure for Measure* . . . had a black Claudio and a white Isabella, a step beyond Nicholas Hytner’s production for the RSC when both Isabella and her brother were black. I have stopped worrying about the parents in such cases; I observe the performances without trying to view colour as realist” (*English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English stage in the 1990s* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997], 181).

¹⁵ Stratford’s Studio Theatre, which seats 260 spectators, opened in 2002 to mark the Festival’s fiftieth anniversary.

¹⁶ The Studio differed in 2003 from the other Stratford houses in that a fixed company of sixteen actors (plus two understudies) played the three dramas in the House of Atreus series. *The Swanne* drew on these same sixteen actors, supplementing this standing cast with six other actors, three of whom were cross-cast from other Stratford productions.

ingful, but at other times, even within the same show, it was unmarked and so, within a production's aesthetics, unremarked upon. *The Swanne*, in particular, a terrific piece of new theater, challenged its audiences to work out from moment to moment if and how race and sexuality, whether written on the body of the character or the body of the actor, mattered. At the main house, by contrast, such challenges were conspicuously absent. *The Adventures of Pericles* instead implicitly assured Stratford audiences that spectators, regardless of their own racial and cultural backgrounds, would be returned to a white home when their adventuring was done: the sort of white home, for example, staged in the season's other two main-house Shakespeare plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Love's Labor's Lost*.

The Studio, unfortunately, is not intended as a space in which to play Shakespeare. Stratford, Ontario, is haunted by a powerful mythology about a canvas tent erected in the fields by visionary pioneers in 1953, a tent that was converted four years later into a permanent, award-winning structure—the distinctive, crown-shaped Festival Theatre overlooking the banks of the Avon.¹⁷ The modernist legacy of Tyrone Guthrie and Tanya Moiseiwitsch is hard to shake, as are the establishment assumptions about culture, race, and Shakespeare embedded in that theater's physical and ideological space by the founding Canadian fathers and mothers of the Stratford Festival.¹⁸ *The Adventures of Pericles*, a rare and moving revival of a strange but wonderful play located on the margins of the Shakespearean canon, made for exciting, stimulating theater that dazzled and surprised audiences in Stratford over the course of its five-month run. "What world is this?" we wondered with Thaisa. The worlds of this production, ultimately predicated on the all-too-familiar world of Ontario privilege, were probably less foreign than they might at first glance have appeared.¹⁹ That said, there seem to be a number of worlds coexisting at the Stratford Festival of Canada—sometimes easily, sometimes not—as actors, directors, and audiences continue to work through the challenges of intercultural and multicultural performance in a new millennium. It will be interesting to see where we travel from here.

¹⁷ On the early history of the Festival and the so-called "Stratford Story," see Margaret Groome, "Stratford and the Aspirations for a Canadian National Theatre" in *Shakespeare in Canada: 'a world elsewhere'?*, Diana Brydon and Irena R. Makaryk, eds. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002), 108–36, esp. 122–27; and Richard Paul Knowles, "From Nationalist to Multinational: The Stratford Festival, Free Trade, and the Discourses of Intercultural Tourism," *Theatre Journal* 47 (1995): 19–41.

¹⁸ See, for example, Richard Paul Knowles's analysis of the thrust stage of the Festival Theatre in "Shakespeare, 1993, and the Discourses of the Stratford Festival, Ontario," *SQ* 45 (1994): 211–25, esp. 218–19. See also Denis Salter, "Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space" in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, James C. Bulman, ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), 113–32, esp. 120–23; and Robert Shaughnessy, *The Shakespeare Effect: A History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 122–23.

¹⁹ Demographic statistics compiled by the Stratford Festival for the four seasons to 2003 suggest that the majority of spectators who come to the Festival (about sixty percent) are from Ontario. In 2003, sixty-three percent of the total audience was from Ontario, four percent from other parts of Canada, and thirty-two percent from the United States.