***Cymbeline***

Moving from problems with *Pericles* toward solutions in *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*

Characters: At least half a dozen characters are sufficiently conflicted and/or dynamic to seem realistic; these are Cymbeline, Imogen, Postumus, Pisanio, Belarius, and Iachimo. The two villains, Cloten and the Queen, have the quality of patriotism, which is usually a virtue, so they also seem somewhat realistic. Only the two princes and the relatively minor characters are one-dimensional. – More nearly realistic

Plot: There are three plots (the dynastic one of the lost sons, the romantic one of the forbidden marriage, and the historic one of the Roman tribute), but they are unified by the character of Cymbeline, multiple interactions and relations among the other characters in all three plots, and the final scene’s resolutions. – More nearly unified

Duration in time: The play seems to cover a relatively brief time; the absence of time signals causes us to take scenes as immediately following one another when they logically cannot. – An appearance of unity

Settings in time and place: Cymbeline’s Roman Britain and Lucius’ classical Rome belong to the same time (although geographically separated), the Rome of Iachimo et al. belongs to Renaissance Rome (the same place as Lucius’ Rome, although chronologically separated), and all of these settings were real and are handled realistically. However, Wales (although a real place) has never been a pastoral locale, and (like all pastoral locales) it is not handled realistically. – More realism than previously, but still no unity

Modes of presentation: Dramatization with a consistent effort at verisimilitude. Two examples are that ghosts and gods appear only in dreams and that “magic” potions are explained by medical doctors. – Basically realistic

Themes

In addition to the same two themes as in *Pericles* (the nature of rulers in the macrocosm of the state and the nature of family in the microcosm of the household), this play conveys the folly of believing slanders and the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation; these new themes are Christian attitudes expressed in sufficiently pagan terms as not to be anachronistic.

Genre

Almost identical to *Pericles* in its resemblance partly to comedy, partly to tragedy, and wholly to narrative romance, but the increased realism of the characters is unlike comedy and romance.