CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Looking (at) women in the BBC Pericles
Authors	Semple, Edel
Publication date	2017-04-01
Original Citation	Semple, E. (2017) 'Looking (at) women in the BBC Pericles' in Hatchuel, S. and Vienne-Guerrin, N. (eds.) Shakespeare on Screen: The Tempest and late romances. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 40-55. doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316286449.004
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	10.1017/9781316286449.004
Rights	© 2017, Cambridge University Press. This material is free to view and download for personal use only. Not for re-distribution, re-sale or use in derivative works.
Download date	2026-10-30 22:23:22
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15563

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Citation: Semple, Edel. "Looking (at) Women in the BBC *Pericles*." In *Shakespeare on Screen: The Tempest and other romances*. Edited by Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Looking at good daughters and bad mothers: women in the BBC Shakespeare Series' *Pericles* (1984)

Edel Semple

Although infamously described as a 'mouldy tale' by Ben Jonson, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* was, nevertheless, a hugely popular play in its day.[1] Since then however, *Pericles* has had something of a chequered history. Omitted from the First Folio and critically neglected until recently, it is still rarely performed and infrequently taught. Indeed, as Paul Nelsen suggests, were it not for the BBC Shakespeare Series, which filmed and aired Shakespeare's entire canon from 1978 to 1985, *Pericles* may never have made it onto the screen.[2] Directed by David Jones, *Pericles* was the thirty-first play filmed in the Series and, to date, it remains the only film of the play ever produced.[3] However, along with other rarely performed plays, *Pericles* was deemed a surprising success of the Series. For instance, after beginning his review by enumerating the difficulties that *Pericles* presents to a director, Peter Kemp declared that Jones's version had successfully and 'triumphantly met' these challenges.[4] In a recent study of the film, Paul Nelsen proposes that 'Jones and his colleagues should be

My thanks to my colleagues and friends – Darragh Greene, Tom Birkett, Barry Monahan – and to all involved in the 'Shakespeare on Screen: the Romances' seminar at the Shakespeare 450 conference for their suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

[1] B. Jonson, 'Ode to Himself', in D. Bevington *et al*. (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 311.

[2] P. Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon: The BBC Video of *Pericles*', in D. Skeele (ed.), *Pericles: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 2000), 297.

[3] Like *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens* and *Henry VIII*, *Pericles* had never been televised before. *Pericles* was filmed in the BBC studios in June 1983 and aired in the US and the UK in 1984.

[4] P. Kemp, 'Between Crest and Trough', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 December 1984, 1476.

commended for generating an extraordinary video rendition of this particular play.'[5] Such praise suggests that the film fulfils the aims of the play's narrator, Gower, who wishes to 'glad [our] ear and please [our] eyes' (Prologue 4). And yet, despite the ratings success of the Shakespeare Series,[6] and the popularity and uniqueness of the *Pericles* film, it remains relatively neglected in discussions of the play and in critical assessments of the Series.[7] This essay will examine the BBC *Pericles*, focusing on the representation of one source of pleasure – looking – and on a group that have often been the objects of such pleasure – women. In her study of Shakespeare's women on film, Carol Rutter argues that: 'As film deprivileges Shakespeare's words, so it coincidentally redistributes the balance of power between men's and women's roles: not only are there more women in Shakespeare films than playtexts but they have much more to perform.'[8] The women of the BBC *Pericles* have much to perform and, as I will show, the film offers fresh and striking insights into each of the central female characters – Antiochus' Daughter, Thaisa, Marina, Dioniza, the Bawd, and the Goddess Diana – but also moves to balance the power between male and female roles. Throughout, I analyse the representation of women's roles (mother, daughter, virgin, wife, murderer, whore, goddess), the construction of gender and sexuality, the hierarchy of objectification and the ideological power of the gaze on the small screen. While the play frequently presents women as desirable objects of visual pleasure, the film repeatedly focuses on women's own looking. Taking this as a central interest, I argue that the film's portrayal of

[5] Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 322.
[6] In her in-depth study of the making of the Series, Susan Willis notes that each play typically drew in one to three million viewers in the UK; in America, where the Series was broadcast on PBS, one play could garner an audience of four or five million. The viewership was further expanded by worldwide sales; by 1987, fifty-three other countries had bought rights to the Series and, in a commercially lucrative move, the plays were made available on video (and now DVD). S. Willis, *The BBC Shakespeare Plays: Making the Televised Canon* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 40.
[7] Nelsen's exploration of the film is the obvious exception. Stephen Purcell has recently suggested that the subject of Shakespeare on television has often suffered from critical neglect. See S. Purcell, 'Shakespeare on Television', in M. T. Burnett *et al*. (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 522.
[8] C. Rutter, 'Looking at Shakespeare's Women on Film', in R. Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 247.

the female gaze is of a significance heretofore unrecognised, for, at various points, it acts as an expression of agency, character, desire, dependence and authority.

The first female character to appear on screen is King Antiochus' unnamed daughter, played by Edita Brychta. As Gower explains, Antiochus and the Daughter are engaged in an incestuous relationship. The film provides us with ocular proof of this as the pair enter a lush courtyard, hand in hand, and kiss on cue as Gower's voiceover tells us that Antiochus 'to incest [his daughter] did provoke' (Prologue 26).[9] The film's setting for Antioch is an enclosed garden – verdant greenery abounds, the earth is sandy, and the noise of cicadas gives the impression of a pleasant Mediterranean day. However, this setting is oppressive: the garden walls are high, soldiers stand at every door, the plants cast deep shadows and, mounted on a wall, the skulls of dead princes oversee the action. As petrified onlookers, the skulls serve to present the Daughter, whom Pericles seeks as his bride, as a kind of gorgon; to look upon her is to die.[10] Furthermore, while the mounted skulls are revealed to Pericles as a warning – solve Antiochus' riddle or die – they also prefigure his powerlessness; having gazed upon the Daughter but failed to see her true nature, the princes are now lifeless and eyeless, and thus stand for eternity as symbols of an inanimate, defective spectatorship. Such imagery, coupled with Gower's introduction, makes it blatantly clear that, when Pericles enters, he has arrived in a corrupt, post-lapsarian Paradise. Through costuming, the film suggests that the Daughter is a product of this landscape. Attired 'like the spring' in a shimmering green gown and wearing a headdress of silver leaves, she is presented as both an alluring and fertile potential spouse and as the snake in the Edenic garden. Costume designer Colin Lavers saw a symbolic connection between the Daughter's appearance, the garden setting and the concealed corruption at the heart of Antioch's ruling family: 'the incest is

[9] For a discussion of the changes and additions made to the text of *Pericles* for the film, see Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon'.

[10] The Daughter's hairstyle also references Medusa: a silver garland holds up much of her hair, but several plaited strands hang down like serpents.

veiled, the plants are a veil, and the girl's costume is revealing but not quite revealing!'.[11] Remarking further on the Daughter's gown, through which we catch glimpses of her skin, Lavers noted that 'You're never quite sure how much you see of her'.[12] This comment might be said to aptly sum up the audience's experience of the character of the Daughter as a whole. The emblem of Antioch is a portcullis and it appears in different guises throughout the scene. Wearing a wine-coloured gown with black leather trim, Antiochus' menacing demeanour is enhanced by the black portcullis that hangs on a chain about his neck.[13] The image of a portcullis appears again when we first catch sight of his daughter, who has been summoned by him. Pericles directs our gaze – 'See where she comes' (1.1.13) – as she slowly passes by a barred window in a medium shot. In Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), Paris and the audience first see Juliet as she passes before an open window. In *Pericles*, as in Zeffirelli's film, the window is used to frame the woman as the focus of the men's discussion and as an object of desire. However, the window grid also separates her from Pericles and the viewer; the Daughter is forbidden and dangerous. In his framing here, Jones also perhaps draws on Zeffirelli's depiction of Lady Capulet in order to hint at the Daughter's corruption. Soon after we see Juliet, the camera zooms in on her mother passing a window. Conversely though, whereas Juliet is shown running and laughing – the epitome of joyous youth and attractive girlishness – the sour-faced, static, and silent Lady Capulet is presented as an example of one of the 'marred' mothers referred to by Lord Capulet. Similarly, Antiochus' Daughter is presented as an example of an ideal femininity that has been tragically tainted; she is an instrument that has been 'played upon before [her] time' (1.1.85) and, as Pericles later learns, she is thus a 'glorious casket stored with ill' (1.1.78).

[11] *The BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984), 19.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] Later, Antiochus' servant Thaliard wears a similar chain. Elsewhere in the film, chains mark out various characters; for instance, Cerimon wears a crescent moon and Cleon dons an embossed square.

Although the Daughter is present throughout this scene, she initially seems like something of a Petrarchan mistress: she stands aloof, immobile, and her contributions are limited. For instance, as Antiochus and Pericles speak to one another, she bestows a brief smile on her off-screen father, but her face is blank as she gazes at Pericles. She remains motionless and impassive as Pericles rhapsodises about her virtues (in an aside) and Antiochus openly praises her delectable qualities. Even when the Daughter does speak to wish her suitor well, her voice and expression are largely emotionless. Pericles is denied any reading of the princess; gazing at her illegible face, he instead constructs her through his own passionate projections. In this way, the film highlights for the audience the loud silences of the Daughter: she is more spoken about than spoken to and, in the playtext, she is assigned only two lines. However, as I suggest below, through the gaze of the camera, the film forms an extra-textual narrative where the Daughter's silence and unreadability become intentional acts of self-fashioning and self-expression.[14]

When Pericles deciphers the riddle and learns of the couple's incestuous relationship, the camera becomes subjective. With a series of jump cuts and jerky headshots, we see in Pericles' mind's eye the pair luxuriate in a kiss, before the Daughter smiles up at Antiochus and rests her head on his chest. Staring smugly at Pericles, Antiochus and his Daughter seem to mock him with their superior knowledge and transgressive love; their self-assured gaze frames him as their helpless dupe. (See Figure 1: King Antiochus (John Woodvine) embraces his Daughter (Edita Brychta), as imagined by Pericles.) The jump cuts and the unsettling musical motif key this as Pericles' tortured fantasy but it is a fantasy that the audience has already seen and knows to be true. On the one hand, this sequence encourages the audience to

[14] I borrow the idea of extra-textual narratives from Rutter's chapter. Rutter suggests that, in reading Shakespeare's women on film, it is vital to attend to 'what the camera records *between the lines* and *instead of the lines*,' and that in film 'meanings are going to reside in the extra-textual narratives the camera constructs by its looking' ('Looking', 242). Emphasis in original.

identify with Pericles and understand his subsequent disgust and decision to flee.[15] However, although problematic, this fantasy also adds to the character of the Daughter; she willingly engages in the relationship and she expresses pleasure and defiance as she directly gazes at Pericles.

At the close of this scene, as the Daughter is led away by Antiochus, she turns to stare blankly back at Pericles. Here, the female gaze appears as illegible; nothing can be read from the princess and Pericles must rely on his interpretation of the riddle and his imagination for proof of her guilt. However, the Daughter is not devoid of emotion, thought or agency. Rather, she deliberately withholds herself from Pericles; he is denied access to, and knowledge of, her true self, as she reserves this for her father alone. Our final view of the lovers shows Antiochus, anxious at Pericles' knowledge, rush to his concerned Daughter, who throws her arms open wide. The camera zooms in to an intimate mid-close up of Antiochus' back and the Daughter's face as they cling desperately to one another. In this moment, which does not appear in the play, the Daughter enacts the roles outlined in the riddle; she is all at once 'mother, wife [and] child' (1.1.70). In public, her silence and passivity define her as a dutiful daughter, but in private she is free to define herself and express the multiple identities that she occupies. In the play, by contrast, Antiochus' Daughter is a flat, undeveloped, and noticeably unnamed character that functions as a cipher and stock type (she is a symbol of immorality; as object of desire, she is a foil to Pericles' destined, ideal wife Thaisa; as corrupt child, she is a foil to his chaste daughter Marina.) On screen, however, through a manipulation of the gaze – a manipulation not possible on stage – the Daughter is empowered. She has a measure of inwardness and, through visual means, this most silent of women says something about herself, her relationships and desires.

[15] The fantasy may also act as a kind of ocular proof of the incest for Pericles and for the audience.

With Pericles' arrival at the court of Pentapolis, the new location and the mores of the monarch are signalled through the set and costuming. A trumpet sounds as the camera pans across the open, cream pavilion that dominates the set and we see in passing soldiers and courtiers in tunics of ivory, beige and tan. There is no darkness here, literal or moral. The atmosphere is convivial and inviting as we encounter the second father-daughter pairing of the play – King Simonides and Thaisa (Juliet Stevenson) – who clearly enjoy a happy relationship. (See Figure 2: Thaisa (Juliet Stevenson) and her father King Simonides (Patrick Allen.) Throughout the pageant of the knights, who have assembled to mark Thaisa's birthday with a tournament, the camerawork and Stevenson's performance make it patently obvious that Thaisa is her own woman. Unlike Antiochus' Daughter, Thaisa's gaze is not limited to her father or suitor; rather, her eyes follow her interests and she looks at everyone and everything in this scene. When Simonides describes her as 'Beauty's child' (2.2.6) and as Nature's marvel made 'For men to see, and seeing wonder at' (2.2.7), Thaisa looks bemused; she takes her father's precepts and praise with a pinch of salt. She obediently attends too to Simonides' pronouncements on the divine authority of princes but, at his conclusion, glances away with a wry smile and lick of her lips. Although she is dutiful, she is neither submissive nor uncritical.

As one by one the knights present themselves to Thaisa, the film attends to her responses. Each of the knights enters with his back to the camera. Thaisa, in the centre of the frame, faces them to read their mottos; the men are objects for her gaze. Although the camera is trained on Thaisa, she is far from being a mere object to be looked at; rather, she is a subject who looks, who looks for and with pleasure, and in particular who actively looks back at those who gaze upon her.[16] Thaisa and Pericles' falling in love at first sight, then, is accepted

[16] I draw on Laura Mulvey's influential arguments here. See L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in G. Mast *et al*. (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 746–57; L. Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by *Duel in the Sun*', in C. Penley (ed.), *Feminism and Film Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), 69–79.

by the audience not simply because this is a romance play or because Thaisa is the 'right' fairy-tale princess but because it is presented as a fitting match of two subjects; the pair silently gaze at one another, equal in their looking and their attraction. During the tournament, which takes place off-screen, the camera focuses on Thaisa and Simonides who give rapt attention to the action. At the cries of 'The mean knight!' (2.2.49), Thaisa jumps up, smiles, and glances back at her father to share her joy and excitement at Pericles' success, before returning to gaze delightedly at the triumphant prince off-screen. In contrast to Antiochus' Daughter then, Thaisa's father is not her sole source of pleasure; her gaze marks her as an independent, self-aware and desiring individual actively engaging with her world. Following the banquet, it comes as no surprise to the audience that Thaisa has sworn to marry Pericles or 'never more to view nor day nor light' (2.5.16). Although Simonides tests the couple by pretending to be displeased at this turn of events, Thaisa cannot take her eyes from Pericles and they hold hands at her instigation; resembling two teenagers caught kissing, the couple only separate when Simonides walks between them. With the good news that Simonides wishes them to wed, the scene ends on a tight two shot of Thaisa and Pericles in profile, with Simonides in soft focus exiting in the background. (See Figure 3: Thaisa (Juliet Stevenson) and Pericles (Mike Gwilym), with King Simonides (Patrick Allen) in the background.) Thus, while the benevolent paternal figure oversees and blesses the union, he is shown to be, healthily, exterior to it and the couple's autonomous, reciprocal pleasured looking affirms that this is a marriage of equals and a marriage of their choosing.

After giving birth at sea to their daughter Marina, Thaisa apparently dies and Pericles is forced to cast her body overboard. Her caulked coffin washes up at Ephesus and here she is revived by the healer Cerimon. Whereas in the play Thaisa shows signs of life within a short space of time – a mere ten lines of speech – the film stretches out the revival. Over two and a half minutes, during which time the only sound is music, we watch Cerimon strive to

reanimate the young princess by massaging her face and limbs. Although Nelsen proposes that the drawing out of the scene 'attenuates the action of reviving Thaisa,'[17] the lengthening of, and the camera's lingering on, Thaisa's recovery is purposive. A range of shots is used in the scene to convey that, in this death-like state, Thaisa has become a passive object of wonder. In long and medium shots, Cerimon, his servants and his friends crowd around the coffin, peering in at its occupant; in close-ups, their concern for their patient is revealed and, in reaction shots, the servants look to Cerimon for guidance. Thaisa is shown motionless, vulnerable, in over-the-shoulder shots, and her body is fragmented while, in close-ups, Cerimon rubs her face and hands. Here, the depiction of Thaisa and treatment of her as a corpse are akin to the monumentalising of other Shakespearean female characters, as described by Valerie Traub.[18] In Traub's analysis, the threat of female agency and erotic power posed by women such as Ophelia and Hermione is contained as they are rendered static and cold, becoming reified objects, such as a corpse (Ophelia) or a statue (Hermione). Lying motionless in her coffin, Thaisa is a frozen object, a 'block' in Cerimon's words and, as such she connotes 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.[19] Upon her awakening, however, this position is contested. At first we see Thaisa look up at the avuncular Cerimon but the camera then becomes subjective as one by one we see each of the spectators' faces from her point of view. This has two effects. Firstly, Thaisa's agency is restored as she questions the men and coolly returns their gaze. Secondly, the reaction shots of the spectators' faces – some gape at Thaisa, some stare anxiously – make the audience acutely aware of what it means to be gazed at and to spectate, and how the gaze can construct the object being viewed. What Rutter suggests about the multiplicity of onlookers in Baz Luhrmann's 1996 *Romeo+Juliet* is helpful here; in looking at the spectators, Luhrmann's film '[offers] an interrogation: how do we look, and

[17] Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 317.
[18] V. Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 25–49.
[19] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', 750.

how do we relate to the images we look at?'[20] Similarly, Thaisa looks at the lookers and our understanding of the gaze is laid bare for examination.

For the remainder of the play, much of the attention shifts to the fortunes of Thaisa and Pericles' daughter, Marina. If Pericles can be described as a 'hero [who] is in search of a father', then Marina can be said to be a hero in search of a mother.[21] The play gives us two women who are to fill the maternal gap left by Thaisa; however, until Marina is reunited with her father, she only suffers at the hands of these surrogate parents. The first foster mother we meet is Dioniza (Annette Crosbie), wife to the Tharsian governor Cleon. The role of Dioniza is 'a part with touches of Lady Macbeth, touches of the Wicked Queen in any fairy-tale' and, in her performance of this *mater horribilis*, Crosbie drew on female stereotypes popular from TV: Dioniza is 'an antecedent of Joan Collins in [the American soap opera] *Dynasty*' and is like an 'archetypal Jewish mum'.[22] Crosbie relished the more 'outrageous' aspects of the role and she read Dioniza as an ambitious and uncompromising woman who was 'obviously stronger than [her husband]'.[23] Following Thaisa's death, Pericles leaves the infant Marina to be raised by the Tharsian couple. As Pericles hands his infant daughter over to her new foster mother, the baby begins to cry. As Nelsen observes, this may be an expression of the baby's sorrow at being separated from her father but it may also foreshadow Dioniza's ill intentions towards the teenaged Marina.[24] Unable to pacify the baby, Dioniza quickly passes her to the nurse; this action suggests that, for all her cooing, smiling, and promises of care, Dioniza is more comfortable with someone else doing the dirty work. This proves to be a sign of things to come as, when we next see Dioniza, she is urging the assassin Leonine to kill her now

[20] Rutter, 'Looking', 259.
[21] S. Gossett, '"You not your child well loving": Text and Family Structure in *Pericles*', in R. Dutton and J. E. Howard (eds.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 353.
[22] *The BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles*, 24. In its recurring attention to the female point of view, heightened emotions, familial crises and socio-sexual pressures, the BBC *Pericles* draws on elements of melodrama.
[23] *The BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles*, 24.
[24] Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 306.

teenaged charge. On the surface, then, Crosbie's Dioniza is charming and ingratiating but beneath this façade is a calculating, determined intellect; with ease, she bends those around her – the reluctant assassin, her hesitant, fidgety husband and the naïve Marina – to her steely will. This inner strength is further in evidence when Dioniza informs her husband of Marina's (supposed) 'slaughter'. As Cleon complains of the seriousness and unnaturalness of the crime, a hint of a smile plays on Dioniza's lips and she toys with her gown, bored by his moralizing. As she explains her actions, Dioniza is self-satisfied, calm and commanding; in a tight two shot she looks at Cleon with disdain and is dismissive of his fretting, bluntly accusing him of cowardice. The only slip in her nonchalant demeanour comes when she must smother a smirk at the mention of her poisoning of Leonine; apparently this is a clever crime she is proud of, but one that Cleon is too dim to appreciate. When she fully turns on Cleon, Crosbie's Dioniza emerges as much more than another Lady Macbeth or a fairy-tale's wicked stepmother. Enraged, Dioniza accuses Cleon of neglecting their biological 'sole daughter' (4.3.3) Philoten (4.0.30); her energetic fury confirms for the audience that she is a fiercely protective mother for whom the murder of Marina was simply the logical act of a loving parent.[25] As she exits, Dioniza warmly pats Cleon's hand and reassures him that all will be well because 'I know, you'll do as I advise' (4.3.50). Delivered in a tone that suggests 'mother knows best,' these parting words serve to affirm Dioniza's intellectual superiority and her mastery of the codes of femininity. Cleon does indeed conceal the murder and Dioniza's performance of maternal benevolence fools even Pericles when he returns to claim his daughter.

Writing on the family in *Pericles*, Suzanne Gossett suggests that the uniting theme of the two halves of the play is that of parents loving children 'too well [and] not loving well enough'.[26]

[25] See also Gossett's recent re-evaluation of Dioniza and the family in the play ('"You not your child"').
[26] Gossett, '"You not your child"', 353.

The BBC film illuminates this link by having Marina's second foster family, the keepers of a Mitylene brothel, figure as parents with immoral designs on their children. Whereas the 'wicked Dioniza' (4.4.33) sought to end Marina's life, it is Marina's virginity that is endangered by her second surrogate mother, the Bawd. Having been kidnapped from Tarsus, Marina is sold into prostitution; with only her wits for protection, she must defend herself against the brothel-keepers and customers alike. In Peter Kemp's estimation, Lila Kaye's fleshy 'hennaed, hissing Bawd' was instrumental in conveying the menace inherent in these sordid scenes.[27] Throughout Marina's time in the brothel, the Bawd endeavours to 'instruct her . . . [so that] she may not be raw in her entertainment' (4.2.42–3) of the clientele. The Bawd's efforts to mould Marina to her view of the world are not simply driven by profit, for the film makes it quite clear that she herself desires Marina as a sexual object.[28] This fervent erotic interest in Marina establishes the Bawd as a female counterpart to Antiochus; and so the film comes full circle. The set for the brothel scene also recalls the oppressive atmosphere of Antioch. The brothel is a gloomy, seedy space and its features create a sense of confinement; set designer Don Taylor 'used hanging, beaded curtains that look like prison bars, windows are grilled, murals are suggestive of the erotic wall paintings at Pompeii, and there is a lot of saturated colour'.[29] Like Antiochus' Daughter, Kaye's corpulent, predatory and overbearing Bawd is a product of her environment.

In her dealings with Marina, the Bawd frequently gazes at her and revels in scanning her body; whereas the pimp Boult itemised Marina's charms so he could go and stir up business, the Bawd's eyes catalogue Marina's qualities for her own pleasure. Sitting behind Marina, the Bawd operates like a Faustian devil, whispering at the young virgin's shoulder of the

[27] Kemp, 'Between Crest and Trough', 1476.
[28] In her recent Arden edition of the play, Suzanne Gossett remarks that, in several lines, the Bawd hints at her sexual attraction to Marina. See William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. S. Gossett (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 330.
[29] *The BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles*, 20.

profit she will reap and the lovers she will enjoy. (See Figure 4: Bawd (Lila Kaye) and Marina (Amanda Redman) in the brothel.) The Bawd's suggestive words and the lingering looks finally come to a head when she fondles Marina. Ironically, as the Bawd speaks of how Marina is now dependent on men for her living and sexual pleasure – 'men must you feed, men [must] stir you up' (4.2.73)[30] – she attempts to excite Marina by groping her from her groin to her breasts. At this moment, the Bawd seems to present women as an alternative to the men she describes (the brothel's patrons); it is possible, she implies, that women could provide for Marina and please her sexually. However, the Bawd's assault on Marina and the young woman's horrified response formulates women as simply another, more dangerous variety of predator; the brothel's men are at least honest in their desire but the Bawd conceals her lust under a veneer of maternal care.

As Peter Kemp noted in his review of the production, Marina could form something of a stumbling block for a modern audience; she is 'ethereally pure', a model of virtue with an eloquence that can apparently charm even assassins and the hardened patrons of the brothel.[31] In the BBC film, Amanda Redman's performance as the sixteen-year-old Marina lends this exceptional character credibility. This is evinced most strongly in the brothel scenes. In the 'fetid enclosure' of the brothel, the power dynamics of the relationship between the Bawd, the Pander,[32] their servant Boult and Marina are played out through the female gaze. When Marina enters the brothel, she sits on a faded ottoman and the Bawd wolfishly stalks her from behind. When the Bawd sits at Marina's back, a series of two shots capture both the Bawd's attempts to make the young virgin amenable and Marina's growing unease. Marina's response is to try to establish a protective distance from the moral pollution, embodied by the Bawd, by directing her gaze elsewhere and then by '[stopping her] ears' (4.2.64). Later, the

[30] *The BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles* adds 'must' (see BBC 4.2.91).
[31] Kemp, 'Between Crest and Trough', 1476.
[32] Willis, *The BBC Shakespeare Plays*, 195.

meeting of Marina and the governor Lysimachus, a regular customer of the brothel, is similarly staged. Like the Bawd, Lysimachus sits behind Marina and assumes the position of a powerful, predatory figure. At several points, Marina faces away from him and looks off camera when she speaks; she rejects his interpretation of her as a 'creature of sale' (4.5.73) and eventually confronts him with the harsh reality that while he has political power, she has moral authority. Under the force of Marina's moving rhetoric, Lysimachus reforms. The change in their relationship is demonstrated by a reversal in their physical positions; having led Marina gently back to the seat, Lysimachus now sits on her right and the couple face each other in a medium shot.[33] At Lysimachus' exit, close-ups show the pair exchanging meaningful glances and Marina looks longingly after the converted governor. The performances and camerawork, then, compound the work of the dialogue which Jones added to this scene; thereby we are provided with 'a credible and substantial basis for accepting and endorsing the subsequent betrothal of Marina and Lysimachus'.[34]

In the climactic recognition scene, the use of close-ups creates a sense of intimacy and specialness as Marina and Pericles are finally reunited.[35] Sent to heal Pericles' melancholy-induced inertia, Marina declares that she has 'n'er before/ Invited eyes, but have been gazed on like a comet' (5.1.80–1). Against the darkened interior of the ship, the lighting on Marina's face and her radiant white gown do in fact make her appear like a divine or celestial figure. We are thus primed for the moment when father and daughter recognise one another and for the arrival of the Goddess Diana, which follows soon after. Despite her luminous appearance though, Marina is not the spectacle in the cabin; rather, in his prone and

[33] For a discussion of the additions to the script at this point, see Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 311–15. Although the additions, as Nelsen notes, endow Marina with more verbal power, it is a pity that Jones and his cast did not treat this 'gap' in the received text as an opportunity. Marina's power is as much visual and performative as it is verbal and the medium of TV could have been fruitfully used to *show* Marina's abilities and Lysimachus' conversion rather than explain them via dialogue drawn from George Wilkins's prose text, *The painfull aduentures of Pericles prince of Tyre* (London: T. Purfoot, 1608).

[34] Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 314.

[35] Nelsen observes that the limited use of close-ups up to this point means that they are used to great effect in this scene ('Shot from the Canon', 319–20).

bedraggled state, Pericles is the object of everyone's gaze. Near-catatonic, he is simultaneously revealed to Lysimachus and the audience as a pitiful oddity ('May we not see him?' – 'Behold him' [5.1.29–31]). Marina's energetic attempts to revive her 'kingly patient' (5.1.67) mark her out as the active, autonomous subject who is responsible for forwarding the narrative.[36] Her vitality is in marked contrast to Pericles' immobility; she moves about the cabin and she is, by turns, sharp and gentle, mocking, commanding and threatening. In the film, it is her energy and her story that ultimately restores Pericles; she is the life-giving force that 'begetst him that did [her] beget' (5.1.190).

Following the reunion with his daughter, Pericles hears the music of the spheres and, fatigued, is put to rest by his followers. As he slumbers, Diana (Elayne Sharling), the virgin goddess who was known in the early modern period as the protectress of chastity and childbirth, appears and instructs the prince to visit her temple in Ephesus. This is not the first time we have seen Diana however: at several points in the film, 'Jones inconspicuously composes covert allusions to the goddess Diana into his shots'.[37] Diana first appears in the guise of a Tharsian citizen; dressed in rags and sitting on the ground, with maternal care she cradles a famine victim, an elderly woman, on her lap. As Pericles promises succour to the needy Cleon and Dioniza, Diana pays keen attention and then turns to gaze pensively into the distance. In Mitylene, she walks past Boult who is busily harassing a potential customer. Diana stares at the pimp – she sees his work and does not approve – and he seems transfixed. Forgetting the customer, Boult gazes after her until she turns a corner; her beauty, divinity or, perhaps, her radiant virginity has mesmerised him. When Diana is gone, Boult shrugs at a whore who is ensconced in the brothel window; the pair is disappointed at losing a potential new employee or, perhaps, is puzzled by Diana's disapproval of their profession. As Nelsen

[36] I am thinking here of Mulvey's theories as put forward in 'Visual Pleasure' and of Linda Williams' arguments on women and monsters, spectacle and narrative, in the horror film. L. Williams, 'When the Woman Looks', in Gerald Mast *et al*. (ed.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 561–77.
[37] Nelsen, 'Shot from the Canon', 306.

notes, 'first-time viewers would not recognize the connection' and this directorial decision may be based on a practical need to people the scenes but, by having Diana witness Pericles' charity and faith, 'Jones establishes rationalization for the goddess's subsequent benevolent interventions'.[38] Subtly but significantly, then, the BBC *Pericles* presents the goddess as an all-seeing, omniscient, and omnipresent authority who secretly influences the lives of mortals. While Gower is, in the film's foreground, narrating the action and guiding the audience, Diana is the power behind its happy ending; we often see her as a silent observer but it is her knowledge and active intervention that guide Pericles to the 'Great miracle' (5.3.55), the resurrection and reunification of his whole family.

Arriving at Ephesus, Pericles performs Diana's 'just command' (5.3.1) and he and Marina are reunited with Thaisa. Although this meeting is 'sketchy and more rapid' than the reunion of father and daughter and has been read by critics as 'experimental, or erroneous',[39] the staging in the BBC film deliberately marks and celebrates the two heterosexual unions as the most desirable of endings. Long shots show Pericles and Thaisa hand in hand, and in the background stand Marina and Lysimachus arm in arm. Marina kneels before her mother, but she quickly returns to Lysimachus' embrace. Although we have followed the fortunes of one family, by focusing on two distinct couples the film looks forward to the growth and joy of two families, one restored and one newly formed. Patience in the face of suffering is rewarded by familial expansion.

While the play may bear Pericles' name, the BBC *Pericles* presents us with a series of women who propel the narrative. In different ways, each of the female characters is a linchpin of this winding, episodic tale. Whereas the language of looking in the play often presents women as spectacles and objects of visual pleasure, in the film the women are not

[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Gossett, '"You not your child"', 359.

simply recipients of the gaze; rather, they are in their own right agents of the look and are clearly framed as such. The women refuse to look, refuse to look away, look longingly, look where they want, look for pleasure, look to criticise, look with and as authorities and look back at those who turn their gaze upon them. They spectate, ogle, glare, observe and scrutinise. In doing so, they develop their different characters, roles and desires and, above all, open up both the play and the film to new readings. The women, in short, provide us with one good reason why the BBC *Pericles* is worth a second look.

Works Cited

BBC TV Shakespeare: Pericles (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984).

Gossett, S. (ed.), William Shakespeare's *Pericles* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004).

Gossett, S., '"You not your child well loving": Text and Family Structure in *Pericles*', in R. Dutton and J. E. Howard (eds.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 348–364.

Jonson, B., 'Ode to Himself', in D. Bevington *et al*. (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 310–313.

Kemp, P., 'Between Crest and Trough', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 December 1984, 1476.

Mulvey, L. 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by *Duel in the Sun*', in C. Penley (ed.), *Feminism and Film Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), 69–79.

___. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in G. Mast *et al*. (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 746–57.

Nelsen, P., ‘Shot from the Canon: The BBC Video of *Pericles*’, in D. Skeele (ed.), *Pericles: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 2000), 297–324.

Purcell, S., ‘Shakespeare on Television’, in M. T. Burnett *et al*. (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 522–40.

Rutter, C., ‘Looking at Shakespeare’s Women on Film’, in R. Jackson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 245–66.

Traub, V., *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 25–49.

Williams, L., ‘When the Woman Looks’, in Gerald Mast *et al*. (ed.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 561–77.

Willis, S., *The BBC Shakespeare Plays: Making the Televised Canon* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Wilkins, G., *The painfull aduentures of Pericles prince of Tyre Being the true history of the play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient poet Iohn Gower*. London: T. Purfoot, 1608.

Citation: Semple, Edel. "Looking (at) Women in the BBC *Pericles*." In *Shakespeare on Screen: The Tempest and other romances*. Edited by Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin. Cambridge University Press, 2017.