

WORKING TITLES

“I will tell you the beginning...”: Dramaturgy and Politics in Shakespeare’s Opening Scenes

“Light from Smoke”:

RAPPING YOUR HEARERS TO THE MIDDLE OF THE MATTER:

OPENING SCENES AS THRESHOLDS

ADD ALSO editors of first folio quotes??? Eg on scenes

?refugees?

Agamben

DRAMATURGICAL – / PERFORMANCE DILEMMA CONUNDRUM – HOW TO START THE PLAY

Every Man Out of His Humour – JOKES?

Stage direction in Twelfth Night - “Catch sung” Repetition of refusal to begin is a frequent joke in Shakespeare’s plays

Primal scene/ scena prima / what is SEEN/ ACTED first/ the origin of our consciousness / the origin of our repressions/ the beginning of our story

Ben Jonson - the arch-theorist of early modern drama – translated Horace’s *Ars Poetica* in his *Timbers* (probably round about the year of the death of Shakespeare, but only published in the 1640 edition of his *Works*). In the part where Horace is talking about beginnings and Homer, Jonson translates in the following manner :

*Speak to me, muse, who after Troy was sacked,
Saw many towns and men and could their manners tract.
He thinks not, how to give you smoke from light,
But light from smoke: that he may draw his bright
Wonders forth after.....*

..... *Nor Troy’s sad end begins
From the two eggs, that did disclose the twins.
He ever hastens to the end, and so
(As if he knew it) **raps his hearer to
The middle of his matter***

I want to hold these two phrases in mind: “light from smoke” , and “raps his hearer/ to the middle of the matter” – these are dramatist’s interventions (perhaps unconsciously) in a debate often framed

as one only about epic poetry. Sound and audience immersion attend that “rapping” - and we will return to the idea of “middle of his matter” a little later on.

Beginnings are hard for us all. We are nervous and anxious about the impression we might make – who will see? Who will hear? We stutter. This physical and bodily response is echoed in the intellectual task when we write, and in addition the weight of other texts, other writers - the “anxiety of influence” can prove overwhelming. ADD MORE ON THRESHOLDS HERE

In the theatre the physical beginning-ness must merge with an intellectual, verbal beginning-ness – the bodies and physical beings of the actors and the intellectual efforts of writers and producers have to - together - commence an orchestrated dance which also articulates a story, a set of events. A physical meeting of actors (with the audience) is also the beginning of a narrative. In this way theatre beginnings are more complex and layered than purely textual ones. This is something often more easily recognised by actors and directors (and alert dramaturges) – than by literary critics. The physical being-ness of both stage and bodies makes the opening scene, the opening moments, a physical threshold for actors as well as a magical other-world of invention for the audience.

This doubleness intensifies the beginning-ness of theatre: its very being is predicated on this meeting – the threshold of moving between two states – unknowing to knowing; stranger to friend; outsider to complicit audience; ...

How do dramatic texts - which must be performed in a theatre which is a live meeting place – respond to this intellectual problematic? Restoration theatre spaces and conventions helped writers and actors overcome the awkwardness of beginnings through staging – the proscenium arch, and stage lighting for example, both separate audience and actors, audience and story - the awkwardness of a beginning is muted, because audience and theatre entered into an accepted pre-agreed (although not explicit) convention once the stage space was entered and lighting dimmed, a fictional world had begun. Even these theatres conventionally used prologues as the means of ushering the audience across the threshold of the beginning. Other than the prologue, such technical conventions are absent from the open air earlier seventeenth-century stages - although arguably, the indoor theatre available to Shakespeare after 1608 was able to use lighting as a mood-enhancer.

The formal thrice-knocking of a staff to begin a performance (unpicked and articulated explicitly in Jonson’s *Every Man Out of His Humour*) enabled an aural pause for audience and actors to enter the playing / listening/ watching space. Perhaps this staff knocking out a rhythm of beginnings echoed into Jonson’s translation of Horace.

Textual and performatively ways in which theatre and dramatists grasp the nettle of beginning-ness in the early modern period included : the prologue – which self-consciously and formally introduces us to the play and the actors (and some critics of course argue that many more plays than we currently know had prologues which are now lost); the induction, which allows the beginning to be postponed and framed by an anecdote or apparently ad-hoc conversation between the actors; and of course - the opening scene itself.

Bruster and Weimann’s masterly discussion of these issues in *Prologues to Shakespeare’s Theatre* :

Prologues were able to function as interactive, liminal, boundary-breaking entities that negotiated charged thresholds between and among, variously, playwrights, actors, characters, audience members, playworlds, and the world outside the playhouse. (p.2)

Whilst Bruster and Weimann however omit (it seems to me) three things:

1. They elide inductions into prologues - (for example their very brief discussion of *The Taming of the Shrew*; and argument that "Rumour" is a prologue rather than an induction, as delineated in folio)
2. Although discussing Jonson and Marston's inductions and prologues alongside Shakespeare (in their final chapter on Shakespeare) – they tend to see these as authorial dictats, and do not debate their contributions in a separate chapter (as they do with pre-Shakespearean prolegomena).
3. The case of the opening scene –whether with a prologue or not – is not considered as part of the "liminal" encounter between actors and audience, author and audience, author and actors. – even where the opening scene is the first engagement/ encounter between audience and actors, audience and script.

Equally those who have written about opening scenes – Wilson ed. *Entering the Maze*; and his earlier *Shakespeare's Opening Scenes* – have not engaged with the ideas of the beginning-ness of those opening scenes or inductions – tending instead to look at thematic textual matters - and equally not looking at opening scenes as theatrical performed moments. The magic of the first moments of a play – held in suspension momentarily as we move from the play –in-the-world to the world-in-the-play – is intrinsic to the magic and effectiveness of an opening scene. How does the playwright move us across this threshold? Any opening scene must perform this illusion of ushering an audience from their world into the world of the play's characters: how does Shakespeare address/ perform this across his career?

I want to suggest today (as part of a work in progress) that by looking at and engaging with Shakespeare's dramaturgical experimentation with opening scenes, we can open up larger questions about his dramaturgy, his politics, and his dramaturgical (as opposed to thematic) investment in crossing thresholds.

Nuttall's excellent *The Sense of a Beginning* very briefly discusses some of Shakespeare's openings in his epilogue - the opening of *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Lear*. He notes what he calls "low key openings" and that no-one seems to have discussed these :

"Such a style of opening is the reverse of rhetorical, though Shakespeare the master rhetorician knows very well that people can be made to listen with a very different sort of attentiveness"

Nuttall argues that Shakespeare uses not the dramatic version of “*in medias res*” - but “*in medias sententias*” - :

“to an entry not so much into the midst of (known) things as *between things*, or between whole orders of things. The ordinary indeterminacy of Elizabethan and Jacobean staging, with its rudimentary scenery and correlatively high demands upon the imagination of the audience, is made the vehicle of an ontological indeterminacy” (p.239)

“Shakespeare then shares with the writers in the epic line an impulse to discover in the technical difficulty of opening, a metaphysical or ontological resonance, but he differs profoundly from them in choosing to make ambiguity his end rather than some presumed, structuring absolute” (p.243)

SAY HOW THIS ARGUMENT DIFFERS

What is a scene? ADD SOME DEFINITIONS: COUNTER WILSON THAT CAN EQUAL WHOLE ADDITIONAL SCENES.....

Hamlet's Player's view of the “scene indivisible”

Folio editors know where one begins (scene prima)

Exits/entrances/ transition to new place or action; idea of completed action; juxtaposed with something different

I am now going to undertake a self-conscious detour (or am I? OMIT): my personal starting point for today's lecture lies in a number of beginnings - some of which have only become clear to me as I have been thinking about this lecture. As with all beginnings, there is no eureka moment.

One came when I was on holiday in France several years ago when it was too hot to leave the house. I was thinking about what was wrong with a first year Shakespeare course I taught. Whilst watching my children splash in the pool and trying not to scratch mosquito bites, I reorganised the course in my head. What students needed was a sense of how plays worked – not just text based, but performance and culturally based – so how to do that? One of my solutions was to get them to think about - amongst other things - “beginnings” and “endings” as both theatrical and textual moments, which are also key entry points for the critic into thinking about a play. So I came to think about Shakespeare's openings in detail. This in turn segued into my book for students on *Shakespeare's Late Plays*.

Another spur lay in teaching *Antony and Cleopatra* as part of that course a few years later - what fascinated me then was the number of highly charged short scenic units – of course we all know the textual problems of identifying these units as “scenes” , given the first folio prints this particular play undivided. I will return to the issue of scenic identity and division in a moment. What particularly fascinated me was the way in which such short scenes could capture a moment of action or insight, both aurally and visually, leaving it suspended in the audience's mind like a flash-frame, before another event was superimposed upon it. The quick succession and juxtaposition of such

scenes struck me as highly effective, aesthetically and theatrically perfect, and highly under-rated critically.

This then (eventually) reminded me that when I was an undergraduate (a long time ago) my tutor (John Pitcher) urged me to read Emrys Jones' *Scenic Form in Shakespeare*. Of course, these were the days in which exciting new theories about texts and reading, politics and texts were excitedly discussed. I recall sitting in the library reading it, probably falling asleep. I didn't see in the book what my tutor thought I might. But I returned to that book this week - lo and behold I had returned full circle to the place I had begun. I too wanted to talk about Shakespeare's scenic units.

Whilst Jones does not talk very much about opening scenes or short scenes –but the idea of a scenic unit – of a sense of how a scene is designed and structured to be a distinct part of the story – is explicit, albeit focused almost exclusively on the tragedies.

So now let me truly begin.

Shakespeare's openings

Bruster and Weimann have encyclopedically catalogued the prologue as opening in late sixteenth/early seventeenth century drama. But not all plays have a prologue – and setting aside for the moment the impossible to be resolved debate about possible missing prologues - what makes a good opening scene? Can we say anything about Shakespeare's openings? Can we/ should we include a discussion of the inductions to *The Taming of The Shrew* and *2 Henry IV* (if this is an induction and not a prologue)? What characterises his openings? Is there a shift across his career in developing an opening scene aesthetic?

Before moving on to discuss in detail some of these opening scenes as thresholds, I want to flag up some big data about openings - firstly Shakespeare's, and then briefly in comparison to some of his contemporaries:

Before discussing these, I want to say that these are not based on staged timings of performances at this stage - I have used line-count as a proxy for relative performance times - so where lineage is in prose this will vary from edition to edition – I have used the Norton edition based on the Oxford Shakespeare.

IN assembling this data, I have made some assumptions here :

1. That if a prologue is extant, that it was generally thought at the time to belong to the play, and integral to that play's performance: so in those plays for which this is true (*Shrew*; *1Henry 4*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Henry 5*; *Troilus*; *Pericles*; *Henry VIII*; and *Two Noble Kinsmen*) I have included *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* in the data for the moment, although they do not appear in the first Folio
2. Is the Induction a special case or not? Again, we cannot of course be sure that there did not exist inductions to plays other than *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the *Second part of Henry*

the Fourth however, we have to assume that if there had been these would have been included by Hemmings and Condell

3. I will be working as well on the assumption when I come to conclusions and analysis (now generally agreed¹) that 100 lines in verse (setting aside stage business) take about six and a half minutes. I will return in a bit to the question of opening scenes and stage business;
 - a. So where the first folio indicates “scena prima” I am going to assume that Hemming and Condell as experienced theatrical managers, knew that, - or wanted this to be where- the play began. Equally, this assumes an overall editorial intelligence (critically contested of course); that individual compositors did not take out/ add headers of their own; and that whatever papers they set their type from, came from a source that used the term “scena prima” consistently. Of course, none of these things can be assumed completely- but what I want to establish is a sense of what “scena prima” might mean. –
 - b. Thus what is now conventionally separated from the main action of *The Taming of the Shrew* as “Induction” is labelled “scena prima” – although no other scenic markers appear until Actus Tertius (p.218). Nevertheless, a lack of additional scenic markers does not detract from the interpretative editorial/ dramaturgical decision to include / define/ see the induction as opening scene; as is the case with the folio edition of *2. Henry IV* the editors of this play assume what is now called the induction IS a first scene (since what is often by modern editors named as 1.1, here appears as “scena secunda”).
 - c. The Folio text omits the Prologue from *Romeo and Juliet*; our currently 1.1 is “scena prima”. Contemporary editions draw in the prologue from Q1 and Q2 versions of the play. For the purposes of this discussion 1.1 as seen as its opening.
 - d. For *Henry V*, the Folio quite clearly says “Enter Prologue”; which is followed by the header “Actus Primus, scena prima”. This is followed by modern editors. This is true also for *Troilus and Cressida* and *Henry VIII* - for these plays, what Bruster and Weimann say about Shakespearean prologues certainly stands.
 - e. *Pericles and the Two Noble Kinsmen* of course not in first Folio

In other words, where the first folio prints/ has and acknowledges a prologue - it is set before the first scene: it is seen as “outside” the world-in-the-play; and closer to the play-in-the-world (as utilised by Bruster and Weimann). Where modern editors have “read” plays openings and amended these with the title of “induction” – this was not how it was represented to contemporaries: the opening of the play has been re-calibrated/ redefined. Can we engage with/ reverse this as part of considering Shakespeare’s openings? I want to re-examine this as part of thinking about ?the nature of these opening scenes.

Slides 6 and 7 –

¹ See Gurr; new Dutton book *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*; E.K.Chambers

- on average across his career two thirds of his opening scenes were between 100 and 300 lines - between 7 and 14 minutes performance time.
- Only one quarter of his opening scenes lasted less than 7 minutes
- When prologues are included across his career, the proportion of shorter initial scenes increases slightly (from about 25% to 34%).
- Whilst this data is interesting we want to compare this with both his contemporaries and across his career.

Slides 8 and 9

Marlowe's opening scenes (except than the prologues) are much longer than Shakespeare's average across his lifetime.

Slides 10 and 11

Marston - pattern is very similar to Marlowe - longer opening scenes, even where he uses an induction (such as in *Antonio and Mellida*)

Slides 12 and 13

ON first sight the variety of the patterning of lengths of Jonson's opening scenes arguably comes closer to that of Shakespeare – perhaps also because the time frame stretches across both Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (although arguably Marston does also). In his 1616 Works – overseen by Jonson himself, and therefore arguably a good indicator of authorial / editorial / dramatists sense of how a play opens - sees both his prologues and inductions sit outside the scenic structure of the play (1.1 always clearly commencing in the 1616 edition after prologue/induction). However, I believe this is misleading, and that slide 13 gives a better picture of the theatrical experience of Jonson's plays – whilst he has a large number of tight short “scena prima” – the impact of these are (arguably) lost by the prefatory prologues (slide 13 shows the dominance of this mode in Jonson's work).

Slide 14 Middleton - Middleton's plays are rarely published with a prologue or induction – (exceptions being *The Bloody Banquet*; *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* and *Hengist*, which read like very short workaday prologues; and the induction to *A Game at Chess*, which is far more crafted) here the proportion of shorter scenes under 100 lines is one third of his output.

Slide 15 – Webster

A smaller oeuvre – but proportionately half his plays have opening scenes shorter than 100 lines.

Slide 16

By contrast Beaumont and Fletcher are closer to Marlowe with a predominance of longer opening scenes.

Now whilst this has been some very enjoyable number-crunching – we cannot conclude very much from it, other than that – arguably - playwrights eschewing prologues use shorter opening scenes; and that playwrights writing in the Jacobean period (with the exception here of Beaumont and Fletcher) also favoured shorter opening scenes. Nevertheless, both of these are suggestive conclusions which would bear more discussion and thought. The self-conscious use of short scenes in place of prologues suggests that dramatists structure openings to think about how that first moment of entrance onto stage, the first engagement of the audience, the first dialogue between actors and audience, has to perform in a similar way to a prologue – although not via addressing the audience directly; and rarely using meta-theatrical effects. The opening scenes we are discussing are very much (in Bruster’s terms) the world-in-the-play.

Now let us look at how the delivery and length of Shakespeare’s opening scenes alter over his career and see whether his work helps substantiate this.

Slides 17 19 and 18

1. It is remarkably clear that he moves away from long opening scenes as his career develops.
2. It is equally clear that the corollary is true and that he develops an interest in shorter opening scenes
3. This is most striking in the latter part of his career – post 1606 (dating from *Macbeth* onwards)
4. If we included *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in this the first column would be even higher. (slide 18)

We may posit a number of hypotheses - perhaps Shakespeare’s collaborative and competitive relationships with Webster and Middleton (who also both worked for the Kings’ Men) produced an environment in which they learned from watching each other’s plays the particular value and impact of the short scene. Perhaps it was therefore a fashionable mutual focus - crossing both public and private theatres . Perhaps it is mere coincidence. It is surprising that this visible and experiential aspect of his later plays has not been addressed as part of critical discussions about his late plays and late style. Does this observation in fact re-draw the boundaries of what we might call his late plays? Let us go back to *Macbeth* – usually classified with the tragedies - and instead see it as part of this group of post-1606 plays which enhance the imagistic quality of openings ?

Before moving on to debate some scenes in detail, I want to consider one other aspect to the shape of opening scenes – and this is who is represented and who speaks first or / and most in them.

We can look at a chart like this:

<i>Play</i>	One of Main Protagonists or supporters/ relatives (eg father figure) opens play	Main antagonist (or supporters) opens play	Outsider to main action or character of lower status opens play/ dominates opening scene
<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	X		
<i>1 Henry VI</i>	X		
<i>2 Henry VI</i>	X		
<i>3 Henry VI</i>		X	
<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>			X
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	X		
<i>Richard III</i>	X		
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>			X (although of high status)
<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	x		
<i>Richard II</i>	x		
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>			x
<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	X		
<i>King John</i>	X		
<i>1 Henry IV</i>	X		
<i>2 Henry IV</i>			X (although Bardolph elevated)
<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	x		
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	X		
<i>Henry V</i>		x	
<i>Julius Caesar</i>			x
<i>As You Like It</i>	X		
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	X		
<i>Hamlet</i>			X
<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	X		
<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>	X		
<i>Othello</i>		X (plus third column?)	x
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	x		
<i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>			X (but only play which opens in a woman's voice)
<i>King Lear</i>			x
<i>Timon of Athens</i>			x
<i>Macbeth</i>			X (women's voices)
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>			x
<i>Pericles</i>			X
<i>Coriolanus</i>			x
<i>Cymbeline</i>			x

<i>The Winter's Tale</i>			x
<i>The Tempest</i>			X
<i>Henry VIII</i>	x		
<i>Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	x		X (song)

SLIDES 20-2

The patterning of opening scenes in the latter phase of his career is remarkable here – nearly all plays from *King Lear* onwards open not with the central character or one of his aristocratic followers – but with outsiders, the marginal, the crowd, and sometimes with characters who take no further part in the plot. Why move towards this aesthetic? Are these two sets of data about the openings of plays from 1606 at all related?

One could argue that some of his earlier most successful plays -such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *2 Henry IV* and *Hamlet* do exactly the same. Perhaps he has learned what makes a successful play? Is he echoing (to coin a phrase) a strategy of transgression and containment? Let us delve a little more deeply into these later opening scenes - both to consider their alternative worlds as explicit adventures in threshold-crossing and to think about how, why and to what ends, alternative characters and voices are our point of entry into these worlds.

What is shared by both inductions and prologues is character ushering??? Check Burnett masters and servants book

For the remainder of this lecture I want to do two things:

1. Consider the nature Shakespeare's opening scenes as self-conscious thresholds through particular analysis of these later plays' opening voices
2. Debate and analyse in detail the short scenes of his later plays as symbolic of a concerted move towards / experimentation in dramatic scenic form which self-consciously experiments with openings as philosophic and dramaturgical problematic and entities - does he say – here is my solution (eg *The Tempest* – so often seen as a statement of aesthetic intent through Prospero – can we argue that opening scene is much more so????/[TIME????])

Let us look then – very briefly at the voices of entrance into these later plays. I won't make any conclusions individually as I discuss these – but try to sum up at the end.

Voicing Opening Scenes in the Later Plays

King Lear - often thought to begin with the King's division of the kingdoms – actually opens with a low key (30 line) discussion between Kent, Gloucester and Edmund. Before we discuss content, let us consider what we SEE, and how we HEAR. Kent describes himself later in the play as a plain man –

he eschews the trappings of court dress and appearance, he speaks in blunt informal prose. Gloucester is an earl, but accompanied by “bastard” (stage direction at entrance) Edmund. These are men who do not feel quite at home in the court (as we later discover). They have a kind of ordinariness about them. The conversation is informal – likely delivered at the front of the stage – the *platea* – between audience and “locus” – the space on stage representing the fictional world-in-the-play. What we see, what we hear, and how we hear it, therefore all emphasise the in-betweenness of the moment: dramaturgically nodding to the nature of crossing a threshold – through the experience of these semi-outsiders. The conversation acts as a scenic prelude to the main entrance of King and his court, and the division which follows. If we look forward to – say – *The Winter’s Tale*, we might argue that Shakespeare re-cycles this opening there in the discussion between Camillo and Archidamus. The conversation is in prose (as with *The Winter’s Tale*) – and the language switches to blank verse once the king enters: Gloucester immediately switches registers from familiar to formal. The content of the conversation segues between semi-knowing political gossip (which son-in-law does the King favour?) and the personal – Edmund’s parentage, and Gloucester’s past sexual peccadilloes. The tonal resonances are intimate and semi-bawdy, an almost banter-like quality between men who are not in public, not on show. Once the Court enters, this atmosphere changes of course. The point of view established by the opening is therefore that of the outsiders, the commoners (in the case of Edmund and Kent) on national and courtly affairs. The opening voices create a perspective outside the action: their placement on stage invites our complicity – they “usher” us into the action indirectly, slowly – less explicitly than a prologue – and upwards from the lowlier sort to those with status [CHECK BURNETT/ WEIMAN ON USHERING AGAIN]

Timon of Athens begins with a street meeting between a poet, a painter, a jeweller and a merchant, as they await Timon’s entrance. Once again what we see and hear is the ordinariness of people waiting for something to happen (95 lines before the formal pageant-like entrance of Timon). There is a mirroring of ourselves in the audience here: the on-stage audience for Timon look more like the off-stage audience than Timon will do; and we too (were) waiting for the action to begin. The satiric representation of the poet’s excessive self-absorption, the merchant’s greed and the painter’s self-deprecating modesty, are finely done – so we both recognise ourselves, and stand aside. The political gossip about Timon’s rise to the top and about the dangers of political ambition, acts as a choral alert: not only because of content – but because of the placing of these comments in the voices of ordinary men at the opening. Knowledge and critical judgment reside in the audience: what happens to that as the play’s action progresses?

All’s Well that Ends Well – deserves a much longer discussion of its opening scene, since it so clearly gives initial voices to women characters uniquely in Shakespeare’s work – and in a way not really seen on the public stage until Aphra Behn looks dramaturgically at this in the 1670s. The scene functions as a kind of prelude to the formal entrance of the King of France in scene 2. We see them “all in black”, and the Countess purveying advice to both Bertram and Helena: Helena is then left alone on stage – her soliloquy alone on stage makes the audience complicit with her desire and her voice. By commencing the play through these female voices, and linking the emergent narrative plot to Helena’s design, Shakespeare’s play here both echoes/speaks to the ordinary woman in the audience, and suggests agency – even authority – can reside elsewhere than in the centre of political or gendered power – or – at the very least – that those without those powers can TALK about those with power, and articulate their own dispossession.

Macbeth's opening scene has the privilege of being the shortest of Shakespeare's – and (is this linked?) arguably the most memorable. The visual and aural precedes the physical entrance of the witches – we are literally “rapped to the middle of the matter” (“Thunder and lightning. Enter Three Witches”). The appearance of the witches – outsiders, supernatural beings, different – is – and needs to be – disturbing. The archaic rhythmic chanting and the assumption of knowledge and power, evoke and establish a choral counterpoint to the action that follows. Here is Shakespeare's only other play which begins on women's voices: but these women are demonised from the beginning – utilising icons of evil (Graymalkin; Paddock calls). This opener therefore – whilst through the voices of the marginalised, are also self-professedly the voices of forces of disruption and disturbance (closer, say, to the opening of *2 Henry VI*, or *Henry V* (where opening scenes voice the views of the antagonists, not the protagonists) – than to these other “late” opening scenes.

Antony and Cleopatra opens with Demetrius and Philo talking about Antony's state of mind – sight and sound are again important – these two enter alone, Demetrius alone berating Antony's fall into lust: this is interrupted by the formal entrance of Antony, Cleopatra and attendants – and an assumed slowish passage across the stage as Antony and Cleopatra dote on each other, a message summons him from Rome, they vow allegiance to Egypt and exit to what Antony promises to be a night of wandering the streets to “note /the quality of the people”. The scene then closes on Demetrius and Philo's final 7 line commentary on Antony's character. These two characters never explicitly appear again in the play (of course the actors/ characters can appear as part of the pageantry of both parties and battles which form some of the key scenes) – however, – like any chorus – these two men are effectively anonymous within the story. Visually (in terms of the structure of the scene) they are onlookers on the action, paralleled to our own watching/ passive status – they can give expression to their views, but nothing they say will change Antony's actions/ fate. The scene acts as a paradigm of our own watching and explicitly so through the eyes of interested outsiders; the beginning scene equally encapsulates in miniature the plot to come (pleasure and Egypt versus Rome and duty) as well as the engagement of the on-stage audience in such a debate.

Omit *Pericles* (although can say Antiochus story line tangential other than as trigger to flight; and as “primal scene” of threatened incest?)

Coriolanus opens clearly in the tradition of Shakespeare's other Roman plays (“Enter a company of mutinous citizens, with staves, clubs and other weapons”) with citizens on the streets in active discussion about economic and political injustice. Noise and assertion (“Rapping”) dominate the opening – which is eventually calmed by the debate with Menenius, which explicitly shows how the citizens are both cognisant with and can use critically – contemporary political philosophy which conceived of the body politic as a physical body. Citizen/ rebellious voices are thus fully articulated – albeit attacked by Martius (later renamed Coriolanus after the battles against the Volscians). The opening scene thus establishes a voice of citizenry as counterpoint to Martius's political and social ambition and attitudes. This choral counterpoint both opens the play, and threads its way throughout, acting as an interpretative hook for the audience.

Cymbeline opens in a low-key way: “enter two gentlemen” – who remain anonymous. They chat for about 65 lines before the formal entrance of the Queen and Innogen (“we must forbear” (l.68) –

when their conversation has to cease. They engage in political gossip – which is also a proxy for political worries about the appropriate succession – the king’s daughter has secretly married a commoner. Despite the irritation of King and Queen, the courtiers say they are actually pleased the planned marriage of Innogen and Cloten will not happen (at the same time as saying they are pretending to be distressed) and approve of her marriage to Posthumous. Thus -whilst simultaneously acting as choral usher of key information - the characters establish and validate a culture in which the ordinary gentleman must outwardly approve of what power decides or thinks, but can express their own views and opposition – the appearance of the gentlemen (as opposed to the royals) - and the likely positioning of them at the front of the stage reinforces their solidarity with the wider audience watching the play. Perspective and point of view are thus created from an aslant position (think of the contrast with the theatrical organisation of masques which assumed the monarch as central spectator).

The Winter’s Tale

This opening scene (at 43 lines) is one of the shortest, only *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* have shorter ones: in prose (unlike the majority of the rest of the play) and spoken by two lowly-ish courtiers from Bohemia and Sicilia respectively, each advisers to their monarchs; alone on stage, prior to the entry of the main dignitaries and visitors and the larger state occasion we witness in the next scene. This scene feels like a prologue to something that is *about* to happen, an almost off-stage ushering into the on-next scene’s on-stage action, an incidental and informal conversation. This interpretation only acknowledges part of the scene’s dramatic function, and nothing of its effect. Camillo and Archidamus take us in a very particular way into the political world we are about to enter more fully. It is a contemplative scene, both men at ease and relaxed, talking about their shared knowledge of the past. They are both conscious of their status (they each serve their respective kings), and of the fragility of political power and states. We learn whether we trust their insights and judgements and how to see the play’s key characters. (See next section for longer discussion of the shape and artistry of the scene as a whole). Both reiterate that they are speaking “in... freedom” (ll.11 and 17), and “honesty” (l.19) enhancing the atmosphere of frank and jovial autonomy, suggesting honesty and truth-telling is important in their worlds: they banter informally. Their language of apparent utopian idyllicism is undercut by the hypotheticals (“if” repeated several times – and opens the scene) and by the fact that these memories are all in the past: truths are proleptically invoked about fickle time.

Archidamus is the last, as he is the first, to speak (and does not speak again in the play): the scene framed by the stranger/visitor to the court. The scene’s structure thus dramatically emphasises the outsider view as key to the opening’s dramatic effect. As he began, so also he ends on a hypothetical statement, echoing forward into the next scene. The horrific idea (“If the king had no son...”) on which the scene ends literally falls like a prophetic curse onto the entrance of the partying, laughing characters arriving for the next scene. The opening scene, whilst spoken apparently whimsically and nostalgically by two old courtiers, conveys larger and wider truths about the world of the play than the characters themselves know. Already the audience are alert to verbal and dramatic nuances: the directors and actors have picked up on their doubled cues, and the gaps in the characters’ accounts of the present are opened and ready for a crisis to appear before us.

The Tempest

This scene shares with *Macbeth* the accolade of being Shakespeare's most dramatic opening: we are plunged *in medias res* into the centre of a sub-tropical storm, with its associated panic, noise, and life and death decisions. It is frequently played with spectacular sound and visual effects, which drown out the sound of the actors' voices. However, it is clear if we read the text carefully that we need to hear what is said.

The opening stage direction ("*A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a shipmaster and a boatswain*") emphasises the audience's aural senses: we hear the storm before we see the mariners. "Tempestuous" noise implies an experience more overwhelming than a usual storm. A feeling of multi-sensory immersion is reiterated in other stage directions. For example, "*enter mariners wet*" brings physical theatre onto stage, and both "*(a cry within)*" and the "*confused*" (l.59) voices off stage articulating anonymous cries of despair act as dissonant chorus to the visual and verbal stage action. From the beginning, the scene and play announce themselves as a discordant multi-sensory disturbance.

The first speakers are the Master and the Boatswain (whilst the mariners enter and work on the sails): the entrance and then exit, of the courtiers interrupts their work, speech and action as boatmen ("you mar our labour"). The boatswain notoriously shouts at Alonzo and Gonzalo "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" – articulating both the perspective of the labourer on the pride and idleness of those in power, and the humanity of all in the face of implacable natural disasters. I shall discuss the scene's overall shape in a moment and the impact that shape and structure might have in constructing an audience's response to their entrance to the island of the rest of the play.

Henry VII

Returns to earlier History plays - the one play in all these last plays which is not opened by outsiders (though it DOES have a prologue – which arguably has this effect) – and uses the first scene to critique power by rebels, who are then brought down by the state during that scene (ie arrested).

So – what might we conclude? In plays from 1606 (ish) Shakespeare moves from a predominantly dualistic model of character representation and point of view (antagonist/protagonist) at his openings, to an outsider's viewpoint – a third entrance to/ perspective on the action and conflict. These outsiders can be lower status courtiers, women, citizens or workers, and in one case, witches. In some cases this perspective is not reiterated again in the play – and arguably such a view point parallels more closely that of a prologue than a full scene – however, these characters and scenes are clearly part of the play-world – not outside it – albeit on the edges.

How might this - potentially political phenomenon – be connected (it at all) to the shortness and shape of these initial scenes?

SCENIC ARTISTRY/ SHAPE in the shorter opening Scenes of the later Plays : THRESHOLDS?

The Winters Tale

REFINE TO DESCRIBE SHAPE/ NATURE OF OPENING SCENE

The play opens with a hypothetical "If", as the visitor, Archidamus, invites Camillo to visit him in Bohemia. This social commonplace between two minions to powerful men innocently floats the idea of comparison between the two monarchs and the two nations. When Archidamus says "see... the great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia" (II.3-4), does he refer to nation or monarch, or both? And does he suggest that Bohemia is better or just different? The doubling of linguistic referents echoes our doubled understandings: is this an innocent exchange or a political minefield? The occasion lends their language and mode of dialogue and informality, even if some of the content retains elements of courtly convention. Prose is usually a mode reserved for comedic scenes and baser characters in Shakespeare's plays. However, here the characters are both high-born advisers. The lack of formal metrical structure conveys orally the sense of informality and of escape from the formal aristocratic public world about which they are talking. Language echoes the opening's dramatic situation: this is an insider's informal view of the world we are about to enter, and we have been let in by the back door. The courtiers' ease with each other is conveyed through the delivery of the dialogue: they switch topics quickly, they interrupt each other (at lines 9 and 10) without anger, as though they know each other well, and they share past memories and an intimate consideration of the young prince. Both reiterate that they are speaking "in... freedom" (II.11 and 17), and "honesty" (I.19) enhancing the atmosphere of frank and jovial autonomy, suggesting honesty and truth-telling is important in their worlds. The relationship between the men is not quite equal: Archidamus defers to Camillo (perhaps because he is the guest), tends to ask more questions, and Camillo has more words in total. How far are these initial assumptions and feelings born out by the rest of their dialogue?

Their banter of mutual self-deprecating courtly flattery is friendly. Archidamus uses the conventional modesty-topos and insists that Bohemia cannot entertain with the "magnificence" of Sicilia and will therefore have to ply future guests with "sleepy drinks" to make their memories "unintelligent of our insufficiency" (I.14). However, Archidamus's opening "If you shall chance" introduces risk and uncertainty through the hypothetical opening and the language of hazard, which echoes insistently and incrementally through the scene. The relationship here is not only that between two private individuals, but also between two monarchs and two nations.

Their fond account of the two monarchs establishes an idyllic past of intertwined childhoods ("there rooted betwixt them then such an affection", I.23). Yet even as they rehearse this shared history, the two men move forward to more recent pasts and to a future as yet unwritten. Camillo's language becomes both more awkward and more legalistic when he talks about recent history. The longest sentence of the opening scene is the most convoluted: "Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters though not personal, have been royally attorneyed with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies, that they have seemed to be together, though absent, shook hands over a vast and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed winds" (II.23-30). This sentence marks a shift away from the hypothetical and the past to the present. It begins with a conjunction, and has frequent qualifying sub-clauses ("their encounters, though not personal"; "together, though absent", "as over a vast", "as it were"), which both partly contradict the main clause and simultaneously suggest scrupulous clerical accuracy. Whilst apparently claiming the monarchs are very close, and decrying the fact that they have not seen each other for years, he describes their meetings as "attorneyed with interchange of gifts" (I.26).

Shakespeare's transformation of the noun "attorney" into a verb ensures we notice its eruption into the sentence: the meaning suggests unconsciously that their relationship is now managed by lawyers not by personal connection. Two subordinating conjunctions introduce key words ("not personal" and "absent") which stand as sentry commentaries on the whole speech, and proleptically echo into future events in Sicilia. Two other subordinating interjections introduce imagery: "as over a vast" and "as it were, from the ends of opposed winds". By both using the word "as" to make a comparison, and searching for two comparisons, Camillo begins to suggest an uncertainty about how to describe the men's current relationship.

There is a nicely balanced tension here as the two courtiers blithely claim their master's boundless love ("I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it", II.32-3), whilst audience and actor trip on the ambiguities inherent in the sentence's description and delivery. This tension between what is literally said (and hoped for) and the structure, grammar and metaphorical not-said is often called "dramatic irony". However, such a labelling can often mask a scene's theatrical power. Here are two senior political advisers genuinely celebrating a political meeting between two old friends: but inadvertently in the process of discussing their joy and hopes, unconsciously and insidiously alerting the audience to a vague sense of threat. It only becomes irony in retrospect, when we know the misreading and betrayals. In the moment of enactment it is two characters exhibiting joy, loss and hope: through their language and delivery Shakespeare enables the actors to signal unconscious insights into the political minefields between two men and two countries.

Neither man names their master, nor talks directly of their current meetings, but move from idealisation of their remote pasts, through the evasive description of why they have not met personally, onto celebration of the young prince Mamilius (the only person named here). The heightened praise ("greatest promise", "gallant child") is echoed what he symbolises: "physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh" (37-8). Camillo's medicinal metaphor, extended into the image of be-crutched old men desiring a longer life to see Mamilius as king, is taken up literally by Archidamus. At one level his question ("would they else be content to die?") is an innocent joke (for who after all wants to die?) However, Camillo's answer ("Yes; if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live") suggests a serious anomie at the heart of the Sicilian political state. If political subjects have no desire to live without Mamilius, what kind of state is it? Archidamus's response, whilst witty and connotative of Christian themes (without a son all would be living half lives waiting for a saviour), also suggests a current political state of disabled inaction.

Politics is both absent and present here: the subjects of the conversation, the rulers, are off stage. Their main advisers are their representatives and proxies present here. Yet their language, both verbal and bodily, suggests a tentativeness about the future and the immediate past. The present is not mentioned at all: only an idyllic past and a possible idyllic future in the next generation. This absence establishes a tension. First, about what is going to happen next, and establish a "present", and second about its nature given the ambivalences inherent in Camillo's images, grammar and delivery. The very language and form of the scene therefore connotes a threshold.

The Tempest

The ship is a microcosm of a larger world, but an enclosed and potentially claustrophobic world as a disaster strikes. As such it shares the features of other disaster-dramas which intensify all

experiences and relationships, particularly the accelerating time frame, the shouted linguistic delivery, and the personality clashes. This scene is one of the first such scenes in western literature.

The scene is only 60 lines, but there is a lot action within this space of about two or three minutes of performed time. The action is telegraphed both by the swift coming and going of characters, and the situation. The movement of characters onto stage within these sixty lines tell us how busy the stage space is made to be. There are seven definable separate scenic “moments”, of separate conversations which flow or bump into the next one, within the scene. The overall scene is structured it like this:

Lines	Characters present/newly entered	Exits	Content
1-4	Master and Boatswain	Master (l.4)	Orders to change the ship’s direction to avert grounding
5-8	Mariners [enter] and Boatswain		Order to change tack
9-27	Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo (and “others”) [entered], Boatswain	Boatswain (l.27)	King demands to see the master: boatswain tries to manage courtiers and sailors
28-33	Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo (and “others”)	all courtiers (l.33)	Gonzalo ironically commends Boatswain
34-7	Boatswain [enter] and mariners		Orders to mariners on managing sails
38-57	Sebastian, Antonio and Gonzalo [enter] and Boatswain and mariners	Boatswain (l.57)	courtiers and boatswain argue
58-67	Sebastian, Antonio and Gonzalo and mariners	Sebastian, Antonio, ?mariners (l.64) Gonzalo (l.67)	Confused noises as ship splits: Gonzalo’s lament for dry land.

It is clear if we look at the shape of the scene that the Boatswain’s physical movement onto and off stage (entering and exiting twice ll.1-27; 34-57) is equal to that of the courtiers (11.9-33; 38-64/7). These literal passages across stage create a sense of urgency, adding rushed physical movement to the textual messages, orders and arguments. The Boatswain is on stage and engaged in debate and action for 50 lines; Antonio and Sebastian for 50 lines; Gonzalo for 53; the mariners for the whole scene; and Alonso for only 24 lines. The representation of characters within the scene does not echo the social structure of the boat’s passengers: Alonso as king has hardly any physical stage presence. Whilst the courtiers share the stage equally with the Boatswain, much of the dialogue is an argument about who should be on deck.

A boatswain managed the mariners, the equipment and the supplies for the effective running of a ship. Here he has a key role in bringing to life the tempest’s damaging impact on ship and people. The master’s peremptory “Boatswain!” and his response “Here, master, what cheer?” establish his serving status and the question of service and work dominates the scene. The master asks the Boatswain to manage and give orders to the mariners: the hierarchy of professional knowledge and work is verbally and visually performed in these first 14 lines. The Boatswain even repeats the Master’s “yarely” in his orders to the mariners (“Cheerly, cheerly my hearts! Yare, Yare!” l.5). This archaic nautical term both lends authenticity and underlines the hierarchical orders. The boatswain’s order to the mariners are friendly (“cheerly my hearts”) trying to get the best out of his men and guide the ship to safety. Although he gives a set of short orders, his tone is less peremptory than the

Master's, as he prefaces his orders with diminutive endearments. His repetition of the word "cheer" to both the master and the mariners suggests an ebullient confident character, engaging effectively with both his superior and inferiors. His pattern of speech is lively, including a rhetorical question as greeting; four exclamatory statements, and two short declarative sentences in the first two speeches. Each of those grammatical forms act as implicit stage directions: the boatswain is the man on stage directing the action (and the ship). When he apostrophises the tempest ("Blow, till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!" ll.7-8) he is shouting at the elements, a confidence-boosting performance of leadership to the mariners. This larger-than-life character comes into direct conflict with the new characters.

Alonso's opening statement ("Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?", l.9) is a rebuke to the boatswain's raging at the elements, and an insistence that one man of authority should speak only directly to another in authority. Throughout the subsequent argumentative encounter the boatswain is insistent upon three key things: looking after the ship, helping his mariners, and the need for the courtiers to get below deck. Why does Shakespeare not re-introduce the master to the action? All we know of him is the Boatswain's "do you not hear him?" (l.13), implying that he is shouting orders from another part of the ship. The conflict Shakespeare wants to dramatise is therefore that between the boatswain and the courtiers, within the framed setting of a terrible tempest. The boatswain's language to the courtiers is peremptory (Antonio describes him as "a wide-chopped rascal", or mouthy, l.56). "You mar our labour. Keep your cabins - you do assist the storm" (ll.13-4), and Gonzalo's response ("Nay good be patient") signals the level of his anger at the courtier's demands in the midst of a life-threatening storm. The boatswain's short, and occasionally incomplete, sentences suggest a breathless brusqueness: short responses whilst he is the midst of managing the ships' deck.

It is in this context that he shouts "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" (l.17). He angrily voices the view that in the face of destructive nature all men are the same: differences of class and status are niceties which prevent salvation. Only those with professional knowledge can save the boat and the lives of those on board. Gonzalo's gentle reminder that he is speaking to a king prompts a more measured response: but he still insists on the primary authority of his crew over the courtiers: "if you can command these elements to silence... we will not hand a rope more - use your authority" (ll.21-3). By invoking the word "authority" with such irony, the Boatswain simultaneously implicitly asserts his own authority and asks questions about Alonso's political authority. This raises broader philosophical questions: under what circumstances is a leader's (or monarch's) authority invalid? What gives a leader authority: is it birth, circumstances or knowledge? These are questions implicitly asked through the combination of setting, situation and character. Even as he attempts to justify his potentially treasonous remarks, the Boatswain has to interrupt the disquisition to address the mariners to their work ("cheerly good hearts - out of our way I say"). His mind is on his job. The boatswain speaks on ten separate occasions, and for two thirds of the scene he speaks alternately with someone else. In most of his speeches he addresses multiple audiences at different points: first the mariners, then the storm; the courtiers; then the courtiers, then the mariners; then the mariners, then the courtiers. The switches of audience within a single speech (indicated partly by entrances, partly by tone and content), help produce a hectic delivery and performance to echo the crisis, as well as reinforcing the Boatswain's centrality.

The boatswain's final words respond to the wet mariners' fatalistic cry ("All lost!" I.51), "What, must our mouths be cold?" A cold mouth proverbially described death, but the vehicle to describe death invokes our senses of taste: his usage echoes his characterisation as a down-to-earth man with a liking for food and drink (Antonio claims he is a drunkard). Imagery of food is used in the play as a way of testing and teasing characters in need, so the phrase echoes on throughout subsequent scenes, creating a mournful chorus to those lost on the island.

The courtiers' characterisation is remarkably insouciant throughout this crisis: they alone seem unaware of impending doom and death. Gonzalo makes jokes about the boatswain's appearance and treasonous comments ("he has no drowning mark upon him - his complexion is perfect gallows" I.29), and Sebastian and Antonio roundly wish him hanged with curses used to impugn the lower classes ("dog" and "cur", II.41,42) and a wish that he drowns (I.56). Their lines mainly talk about the boatswain. The boatswain's final interjection to the courtiers, "work you then!" (I.42) is spoken as a counter-curse. Although a short exclamatory it complexly expresses the Boatswain's views: the only hope for salvation is through working to save the ship, and yet the courtiers (as aristocrats) do not work. The audience clearly see two different groups of men. One is the mariners led by the boatswain desperately labouring to save ship and lives from breaking up on the rocks in a storm, and the second is a group of useless courtiers, literally getting in the way, ignoring instructions, and cursing the workmen.

The technical vocabulary used by master and boatswain renders the situation and characterisation credible. The orders successively shouted to the mariners would stop a ship drifting onto shore with an on-shore wind: "take in the top sail", prevents the ship drifting leeward; "down with the top mast!" (I.34) lightens the overhead weight; and "bring her to try with main-course" (I.35) would sail close to the wind using only the main sail. "Lay her a-hold a-hold. Set her two courses off to sea again" (I.49) is an instruction to sail the ship close to the wind with two sails, attempting to move the ship away from shore and out to sea. Of course, these desperate instructions fail to save the ship, but the sailors are authentically trying every possible action to save ship, crew and passengers. The verisimilitude established by the technical accuracy helps lend the disaster emotional and dramatic depth.

The voices and presence of the mariners is textually marginal and yet central to the whole action in this scene. Although the mariners only speak directly once (I.51), this line marks the scene's key turning point, as it announces the ship's knell. We have seen the mariners labouring throughout the scene (on the boatswain's instructions), and their speech marks the end of their labouring. The anonymous cries that come from off-stage are from both the mariners and the passengers, and are indistinguishable. As the ship goes down, all men are the same. So the scene's action replicates the Boatswain's implicit social and political insight: when the labourers stop working, the world literally falls apart.

The scene ends on Gonzalo's dream of a dry acre of barren ground: no fantasy or utopia, simply solid ground. We do not know the fate of any of the characters as the ship breaks up. The scene is the quintessential cliff-hanger, leaving us with a series of both practical and philosophical questions: not only, what happens next? But also, who has the right to rule?

CONCLUSIONS

. We can make significant conclusions about how Shakespeare's stagecraft, plotting and language construct the play world and our engagement in it from the beginning.

1. Shakespeare uses openings in these plays, none of which are either conventionally comic or conventionally tragic (the articulation of a generational or tribal conflict which the plot resolves or blows apart). In *The Winter's Tale* the opening is deceptively oblique, an apparently desultory conversation between two courtiers marking time, which nevertheless presages uncertainties and a sense of time being out of joint. In *The Tempest* we are plunged *in medias res* into the heart of a pure storm, which literally displaces audience and characters, othering the audience from our accustomed ideas and experiences. There is a sense in which this opening scene is the epitome of all openings.
2. Shakespeare's opening scenes obliquely raise general questions essential to the individual play's philosophical debates in these late plays. ADD MACBETH, TIMON, A AND C. In *The Winter's Tale* political and philosophical questions are raised about the future state of Sicilia, albeit introduced under a cloak of banter. In *The Tempest* questions of leadership and status arise: who can or should lead in a crisis? What role does status play in our attitudes to and trust of others? In *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* questions about the rights of women to both inherit power and to choose their husbands are explicitly raised. The question of whether leadership should be determined by gender and birth are key open-ended interrogatives from the openings of all four plays.
3. In all the plays, the opening is hosted by characters not subsequently featuring as "main" characters. This oblique window into the world of the play establishes and legitimises an "outsider" perspective both on the action that is to come, but also as a general philosophical stance. Of course, by using marginal or marginalised characters, Shakespeare ensures that we do not miss the key action when the main characters do finally enter. But these beginnings are more than accidental. This outsider perspective invites a sceptical and enquiring audience, always aware that it is outside the action even when it becomes most intense. This perspective may be challenged by subsequent action and narrative. Puttenham on pastoral – lowly characters quote A new definition of *in medias res* = middling sort???
4. Shakespeare uses any opening scene as a door into a new world – as a crossing: a metaphor made explicit in the two plays we have looked at as scenic wholes. The action of *The Tempest*, which literally plunges characters into water via a shipwreck that we see and hear. We do not know what will happen afterwards, only that a new situation must follow. In *The Winter's Tale* the opening scene is a metaphoric and literal ante-chamber to the subsequent public political meeting in the royal Sicilian palace, an entry way into it for us and the courtiers. The opening scene is both literally and metaphorically a space through and across which we traverse *into* the heart of the play. In *The Tempest* we cross the ocean through the experience of the scene, in *The Winter's Tale* we amble through an ante-chamber and enter a different world. *The Tempest's* opening scene exemplifies self-consciously and meta-theatrically this sense of how an opening scene works, framing and constructing a crisis situation in a closed environment which literally explodes, opening out new possibilities of action and character.

5. Characters who hold power within the State represented within the story rarely appear in opening scenes. The exception to this is *Cymbeline*, where the Queen appears at line 70 and the King (Cymbeline) at line 125 of the first scene. Although Alonso (King of Naples) appears in the opening scene of *The Tempest*, he does not rule on the island or actively initiate any action in the story. Shakespeare's opening displacement technique may suggest Alonso's power is literally questioned by his structural placement in the play's opening.
6. Intense, private or discrete worlds open the plays: the scene's relationship to the rest of the play is metaphoric and narrational. Each scene plunges us into one aspect of the play's world which has significant verbal, thematic and dialectical relationships with key questions and ideas raised by the whole play. Each opening functions as a clear visual image as well as a story: the intense private conversation adjacent to the corridors of power; the violent and frightening storm which assaults all our senses; the aged lone seer standing on stage inviting us into a fireside story. The visual and verbal intensity of the openings scenes are integral to our subsequent experience and understanding of the play. They are also all uniquely theatrical in their concise combination of a condensed vertical visual experience with the horizontal experience of a forward moving narrative plot.
7. Each scene grabs our attention in different ways: these short scenes paradoxically condense and bring together the action, the visuals and perspectives on that action.
8. Indirectly, the conflict which will precipitate each play's potentially tragic crisis is discernible: the threat of death to a son; war with Rome; a tempest which threatens lives; the problem of having a daughter as an heir. Potential solutions are opaque, and outcomes are uncertain, even potentially tragic. In this sense, opening scenes – Janus-like – face both back and forward into the play; drawing the audience along with them.
9. How many opening scenes in prose- and relatively free of imagery: this plain-spoken effect is enables an opening scene to usher us gently into the new world, but also signals the marginal status of the protagonists of the opening.
10. SOURCES??? Openers all shx ??
11. Choral function (H5)

See comment above on tempest opening scene as aesthetic AND political statement

More on Plautus and slave introductions? Plautus and Shx?

The opening of a text is our first entry into the story's fictional world: and in a play the opening scene or prologue additionally gives us a visual and oral entrance into this world. Equally, in a play which will last at the most three hours, it is of course crucial that the opening catches the audience's attention. This is why plays often open in the middle of some action or conversation, so the audience is plunged immediately into the characters' world and setting. Drama depends upon forward moving action and each individual scene is integral to the action and plot. But an opening scene is never "just" an introduction: it is imagistically and structurally critical. Of course all audiences require time to settle into a play before their attention is full engaged, and some openings are prologues to the

main action.. We must pay full attention from the beginning, because Shakespeare gives us key clues both to the forthcoming action, to character and perspective, and implicit directions to the actors about who to be and how to perform.