

## Roussillon and Retrospection in *All's Well That Ends Well*

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MUCH OF *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL* IS SET IN THE FRENCH PROVINCE of Roussillon. Shakespeare invests Roussillon with a strong sense of retrospection, of mourning, of melancholy, and of looking to the past: it is as if it is enshrouded by a perpetual autumn mist. The Countess regards her son, Bertram, through the lens of her dead husband: "In delivering my son from me" she says, "I bury a second husband" (1.1.1–2).<sup>1</sup> Bertram's imminent departure for Paris makes the Countess think, not of her son's bright future, but of her own sad past. Like Olivia at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, she lives in a vale of tears. Not only does the Countess continue to mourn her dead husband, she also mourns Helena's dead father for her. On Helena's famous physician father, Gerard de Narbonne, the Countess laments, "This young gentlewoman had a father—O, that 'had', how sad a passage 'tis" (1.1.13–14). Overrating the past, living for what has been lost, the Countess credits Helena's good qualities not to Helena herself but to her father: "Her dispositions she inherits, which makes fair gifts fairer" (1.1.30–35). A proponent of succession and of "birth-right" (1.1.52), the Countess expresses a love for genealogy, which is just another form of obsession with the past.

The location of Roussillon comes from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Shakespeare's source for *All's Well That Ends Well*.<sup>2</sup> Most scholars agree that Shakespeare used the translation of Boccaccio's story of Gileta of Narbonne, the ninth story from the third day, that appeared in Painter's 1566 *Palace of Pleasure* (although some have made claims that le Maçon's 1545 French translation of Boccaccio played an intermediary role).<sup>3</sup> Yet Shakespeare's "Rossillion" has received strikingly little critical attention, with discussions of it as brief as Russell Fraser's gloss, "an ancient province separated from Spain by the Pyrenees".<sup>4</sup> As I shall argue here, following John Gillies's notion of a "poetic geography," Shakespeare's Roussillon is more the stuff of fiction than

of fact.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare associates Roussillon with an idealized moment in the history of medieval France, before the Hundred Years' War, and even before the Norman Conquest. The "French" Roussillon of *All's Well That Ends Well* contextualizes the play's overarching exploration of the dynamics of nostalgia, illustrating the extent to which nostalgia can be experienced for a time or a location that never really existed in the first place. As characters in *All's Well That Ends Well* define themselves in terms of their relationship to Roussillon's Frenchness, they dramatize the larger questions of history, inheritance, and the claims of genealogy that motivate the play as a whole.



The Norman Conquest enshrined French as the language of politics, prayer, and poetry in England from 1066 to the time of Chaucer.<sup>6</sup> Its legacy ensured that English culture looked consistently to France for models to emulate as well as repudiate. Through the sixteenth century, France and its history remained a fascinating, engaging subject for the English. Mary I lost England's French territories, most importantly Calais in 1558, and the English continued to hold dear their memories of success in the early stages of the Hundred Years' War: a reversal of the conquest which brought with it a detailed sense of French geography expressed by Henry V's "I love France so well I won't part with a village of it" (5.2.169).<sup>7</sup> Texts such as John Eliot's 1592 *Survey* or John de Serres's 1598 *General Inventorie of the historie of France*, and Robert Dallington's *The View of France* (1604) offer a combination of geography, history, and sociological commentary. Through the sixteenth century, the English were particularly attuned to the Wars of Religion. Since the accession of Henri IV in 1589, French pamphlets detailing the situation made their way to England, where they were published in translation.<sup>8</sup> Well-known works such as Anne Dowriche's *The French History* (1589), Michel Hurault's *An Excellent Discourse Upon the Now Present Estate of France* (1592) and Antony Colynet's *The True Historie of the Civill Warres of France* (1591) furnished Shakespeare with details that, as scholars from Frances Yates to Richard Wilson discuss, provide the impetus for *Love's Labour's Lost*.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike *Love's Labour's Lost*, which was inspired by real-life characters and situations, *All's Well That Ends Well* dramatizes "Rossillion" as a place almost frozen in time, like Shangri-la. Roussillon's retrograde quality is at odds with the play's structural and thematic concern with progress, or with what Parolles calls, at one moment, "rational increase" (1.1.112) and, at another, "bloody succeeding" (2.3.191).

Helena's relentless forward motion—her dogged pursuit of her own ambitions for her future with Bertram—contends with the powerful principle of inertia embodied by "Rossillion."<sup>10</sup> The first scene of the play sets up the expectation that the Countess will oppose Helena's match with Bertram. Yet she turns out to be one of Helena's most ardent supporters, along with the French king, who lives in the past to an extent that rivals the Countess. With members of the backwards-looking previous generation failing to play their expected impedimental role, it falls to Bertram to play the cards of blood and birth that he may be expected to repudiate romantically. Although he is introduced to us as a young man in a hurry, his horror at the thought of marrying Helena reflects a keen sense of the past, manifested through expressions of historical and genealogical entitlement.

In his introduction to the Arden edition of the play, G. K. Hunter observes, "the atmosphere of the play is decidedly French; the names Parolles, Lavatch, and Lafew seem to indicate a mind at work strongly imbued with a consciousness of French meanings."<sup>11</sup> Characters with names such as Lavatch and Lafew, and odd, pseudo-French phrases such as "mort du vinagre," elaborate the play's Frenchness. Shakespeare also makes it clear from the very beginning that "Rossillion" is a part of France, and that its inhabitants are at the beck and call of the French king. In the very first lines of the play, Bertram describes his relationship with the king in feudal terms: "But I must attend his majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection" (1.1.3–4). Lafew expects the King of France will take a position of guardianship over Bertram and his mother, using familial metaphors to express the intimacy and extent of the king's interest and control: "You shall find of the king a husband, madam, you, sir, a father" (1.1.5–6). These relations of servitude and patronage make Roussillon appear to be a backwards-looking rustic, enthralled by Paris, the imperial center.

When the Countess learns of Helena's plans to offer medical aid to the King of France, her horror is that of the self-conscious provincial, petrified by the conviction that little Roussillon has nothing to teach Paris:

But think you, Helen,  
If you should tender your supposed aid,  
He would receive it? He and his physicians  
Are of a mind; he, that they cannot help him,  
They, that they cannot help. How shall they credit  
A poor unlearnèd virgin, when the schools,

Embowelled of their doctrine, have left off  
The danger to itself?

(1.3.207-13)

For Lisa Jardine, this passage encapsulates the threat represented by Helena's abilities, and the key issue for this scene and for the play as a whole is the disruptive capacity of the learned woman.<sup>12</sup> Helena's status as a "poor, unlearned virgin" is reinforced by her marginality as a mere provincial. Thus, she couches her audacious offer to the king, I'll heal the fistula and you give me Bertram, in terms of self-abasement and diffidence:

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand  
What husband in thy power I will command.  
Exempted be from me the arrogance  
To choose from forth the royal blood of France,  
My low and humble name to propagate  
With any branch or image of thy state;  
But such a one thy vassal, whom I know  
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

(2.2.189-92)

In Paris, Helena earns a special, privileged place, thanks to services rendered. In Paris, the noble Bertram, Count of Rossillion, is just another vassal of the king. Even though Helena is in love with Bertram and always has been, within the world of the French court, he is free for the asking, not only because he is as yet unmarried, but because he's just Rossillion. It's not as though Helena is asking for a French prince.

Shakespeare's "Rossillion" is presented as a long-standing and untroubled province of France. Nowhere in the play is it mentioned that for much of its history, Roussillon was Rosselló: part of Catalonia, not France.<sup>13</sup> Like many border territories, the province of Roussillon, also known as Septimania (a part of Occitania, now known as Languedoc) and currently known as the *département* [county] of Languedoc-Roussillon, is a site of ethnic mixture and political contestation. As one scholar puts it: "in the Middle Ages there certainly was never an Occitania consisting of a coherent political unit; rather, a multiplicity of disparate, competing and often semiautonomous regions and towns with complex and shifting alliances."<sup>14</sup> Roussillon has been occupied by the Romans, by Hannibal's army, which marched through on their elephants, as well as by the Visigoths, the

Muslims, the Franks, and the Catalans. As part of the Roman province of Gallia Narboniensis, it fell to the Visigoths in 462. The Visigoths were defeated by the Muslims in 719, and in 756, the area came under Frankish rule, when it was conquered by Pépin le Bref. When Charlemagne invaded Spain a generation later, in 778, he discovered the territory devastated by war. He stabilized and unified it by bequeathing lands to Visigothic refugees from Spain that he called *spani* or *hispani*, Visigothic refugees from Spain, and by founding a number of monasteries. Shortly thereafter, the province came to be governed by Gothic counts, starting with Suniaire II in 893. Thus, even when it was under putative Frankish rule, Roussillon was governed by descendants of the Visigoths. The last count of Roussillon, Gerard II, died in 1172, leaving his territories to King Alphonse II of Aragon, the grandson of Raymond Berenguer, the count of Barcelona.

The history of Roussillon reveals complex and volatile cultural and national affiliations. However, Shakespeare's representation of Roussillon makes no acknowledgment of its Catalanian and Aragonese connections. Instead, *All's Well That Ends Well* foregrounds France, and France's Carolingian history. Lafew observes, on Helena's magic:<sup>15</sup>

I have seen a medicine  
That's able to breathe life into a stone,  
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary  
With spritely fire and motion, whose simple touch  
Is powerful to araise King Pippin, nay,  
To give great Charlemain a pen in's hand  
And write to her a love-line.

(2.1.68–73)

Lafew's references to Pépin and Charlemagne connect Helena to the brief moment in Roussillon's history before the seventeenth century when it is the most "French". Linking Helena's magic to King Pippin, son of Charles Martel, and to Charlemagne, son of Pippin, who restored order to Roussillon, Lafew dignifies Helena's own involvement in raising the dead, and in turning soldiers into lovers. The exploits of the ambitious, expansionist Charlemagne were the subject of extensive literary elaboration in chansons de geste, which constructed a noble past in which France and the French served as mighty models of chivalry and civility.<sup>16</sup> Lafew thus places Helena's medical work in the realm of romance: the world of sprightly dances and stones coming to life. Glamorizing her achievement by associat-

ing it with a semihistorical, semilegendary past, Lafew infuses Helena and this essential moment in the play with wonder and gravitas.

However, these references to Pépin and Charlemagne also imply the extent to which Helena's medical abilities constitute a daughterly inheritance. In his famous speech at the beginning of *Henry V*, the Archbishop of Canterbury refers to the descendants of Pépin and Charlemagne when he explains the Salic law, which bars female inheritance. Canterbury argues that it is a double standard for the French to deploy the Salic law to refute Henry V's claim to the throne, for many French kings have, themselves, inherited the throne through the female line:<sup>17</sup>

King Pépin, which deposed Childéric,  
Did, as heir general—being descended  
Of Blithild, which was daughter to King Clothaire—  
Make claim and title to the crown of France.  
Hugh Capet also—who usurped the crown  
Of Charles the Duke of Lorraine, sole heir male  
Of the true line and stock of Charles the Great—  
To fine his title with some shows of truth,  
Though in pure truth it was corrupt and naught,  
Conveyed himself as heir to th' Lady Lingard,  
Daughter to Charlemain, who was the son  
To Louis the emperor, and Louis the son  
Of Charles the Great.

(*Henry V*, 1.2. 65–77)

Despite its masculinist military rhetoric, Henry's successful campaign is predicated upon his own connection to a maternal line. Thus, for Shakespeare, King Pépin and Charlemagne imply not only chivalric heroism but also female inheritance. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena's inheritance allows her to claim the man she wants (a claim that is, perhaps punningly, "barred" by Bertram), just as her successful campaign, emblemized by her blossoming pregnancy, is sanctioned by the Countess, her substitute mother. Helena's refusal to accept Bertram's "bar" ultimately introduces fresh blood into Roussillon (like those Salic women, whose weak morals instigated the Salic law (*Henry V*, 1.2.48–49)). Her actions undermine the ideologies of genealogical purity that motivate Bertram and, in *Henry V*, justify the French claim to the throne.

Reading Lafew's allusions to Pépin and Charlemagne back through *Henry V* (a play that was still quite fresh in Shakespeare's mind),

Carolingian history appears malleable, easily shaped and reshaped to suit the present agenda. Although it was used, in the Middle Ages, to forge what one historian calls "an ancient, continuous, and distinguished history that belonged to the French," the Frankish presence in Roussillon is overshadowed by the involvement of Aragonese monarchs in the territory.<sup>18</sup> The ongoing relationship between Roussillon and its western neighbors was formalized in the 1258 Treaty of Corbeil, when Louis IX of France surrendered his claim to Roussillon, along with Barcelona, to the Crown of Aragon. Just as, in *Henry V*, the French deliberately obscure the past to mount an argument against the English claim to the throne, Lafew uses the key figures of Carolingian history to endow Helena's activities with the kind of noble genealogy that she, herself, lacks. As Helena revives the king, he sees her bringing the past to life. However, this is a past interpreted according to Lafew's very specific, French, agenda. Ultimately, Helena's inheritance allows her to replace Lafew's French history with an alternative vision, that acknowledges the complexities of Roussillon's past. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, as in *Henry V*, the realities of female inheritance trump the systems of masculinist genealogy. Henry V's victory calls attention to England and France's shared inheritance through the mother: a tradition of mixed blood to which he will contribute when he vows, at the end of the play, to produce, with Catherine, an heir "half French half English" (*Henry V*, 5.2.201). Of course, Henry V imagines only a male heir. Nevertheless, his promise will enact the terms of the peace described by Catherine's mother, Queen Isabel: "That English may as French, French Englishmen, / Receive each other" (5.2.352). In *All's Well That Ends Well*, as in *Henry V*, female inheritance uncovers and performs the history of hybridity that is obfuscated by male revisions of the past.



Shakespeare owes the idea of a French Roussillon to Boccaccio, who makes it clear that his Rossiglione is in France, "nel reame di Francia" [in the kingdom of France].<sup>19</sup> Yet by the early 1350s, when Boccaccio was writing the *Decameron*, the title of Count of Roussillon had been absorbed by the King of Aragon. When the Montpellier-born Jaume (or Jacques) I of Aragon died in 1276, his territory was divided between his sons Pere, who got Aragon and Catalonia, and Jaume II, who inherited Roussillon as part of the Kingdom of Majorca, which had been conquered by his father. The kingdom of Majorca, which included Roussillon, remained independent until 1344, when it was

brought once again under Aragonese control after Jaume II refused to do homage to Philippe IV of France for the seigneurie of Montpellier. Jaume II asked Pere IV for aid, who refused and then declared war against Jaume, seizing Majorca and Rossello in 1344. At this point, Montpellier was ceded to France, and Roussillon was incorporated into the principality of Catalonia, part of a feudal confederation which included Aragon.

Although Roussillon quite recently had been reunited with Aragon, Boccaccio makes Roussillon French, leaving out the Aragonese connection entirely. Boccaccio's Roussillon also gestures toward the quasi-mythical, idealized history of medieval, Carolingian France evoked by Lafew's references to Charlemagne and Pépin. This kind of nostalgia resonates with the larger theme of the third day of the *Decameron*, which concerns the restoration of things that had once been lost: as Rigg's translation reads, "discourse is had of the fortune of such as have painfully acquired some much-coveted thing, or, having lost, have recovered it."<sup>20</sup> I would add, however, that by focusing on the activities of a woman who knows what she wants, like Neifile herself, Boccaccio is looking back to the tradition of strong, cultivated women associated with the twelfth-century South of France. There is the canny and indomitable Eleanor of Aquitaine, or, even more significantly, Ermengarde of Narbonne, the viscountess and troubadour muse, whose influence is credited with the articulation of the essential literary convention of courtly love, or *fin amour*. Ermengarde was expelled from Narbonne by her nephew and successor, and she sought refuge, at the end of her days, with the Knights Templars in Roussillon.<sup>21</sup>

In any case, Shakespeare had more recent precedents for French control over Roussillon than Boccaccio. In 1462, Louis XI supported Joan II, King of Aragon and Navarre, who was fighting with his son about the crown of Navarre, against the revolt of his Catalan subjects. This placed Louis XI in an excellent position to bargain for Roussillon—desirable for its status as a bustling center of trade, with its port at Collioure, just south of Perpignan. The Catalans sought support from Pere, a descendant of the counts of Urgel who became King of Aragon in 1463. He was, in turn, supported by Burgundy. Louis XI made the King of Spain an offer he couldn't refuse, purchasing it from him for 300,000 crowns. Roussillon remained in French hands until 1493, when the terms of a treaty between France and Spain restored it to Ferdinand and Isabella. During the ensuing wars between France and Spain (1496–98), the people suffered



equally from the Spanish garrisons and the French invaders. The traditional Catalan dislike of the Castilians, however, was eroded by the glory of Carlos Quintus, and, when Perpignan was besieged by the French dauphin in 1542, the people supported their Spanish monarch. Far from a peaceful French fiefdom, then, Roussillon is a major site of Catalan resistance to French incorporation: a process that was to become increasingly complex as the French gained control. Louis XIII supported the Catalan revolt against the Castilians in 1641, earning him the title of Count of Barcelona. The 1659 treaty of the Pyrenees secured Roussillon and part of the Cerdanya to the French crown. Louis XIV made a concerted effort to cultivate the political allegiance of the new French province of Roussillon; however, a strong sense of cultural separateness remains in Roussillon to this day.

Shakespeare starts off making "Rossillion" French in *All's Well That Ends Well*, however, he ultimately conveys the idea of a resistance to French incorporation. We first detect a note of this when Parolles describes Helena's virginity as "like one of our French withered pears: it looks ill, it eats drily" (1.1.136-37). Here, Parolles implies that France is something past tense: to be sloughed off, like a dead skin. Parolles says "our French withered pears," suggesting that he identifies with Frenchness even as he makes this far from flattering comparison. The comment appears in a scene that is all about dead or dying father figures (punningly, French withered *pères* [fathers]), and concerns in particular how the health of the King of France is compromised by a fistula. Parolles's image of a French withered pear suggests that France, and, more generally, the idea of a French Roussillon, will vanish: that it is as short-lived as, say, Helena's virginity. Parolles's comment also looks forward to the upcoming scene, in which Helena and the King of France are left alone together: a scene that can be played for sexual tension, with the sense that Helena might be expected to perform a kind of healing that is more sexual than medical.

Described by Patricia Parker as "the champion of increase," Parolles knows that French withered *pères* are not the right choice for Helena.<sup>22</sup> Parker translates his name to mean "words"; however, in Catalan, the verb *parolejar* means one who speaks garrulously: "Garlaire, xerraire, que es complau a parlar molt" [to speak garrulously, to be talkative, or prone to speak a lot].<sup>23</sup> Not only a figure for linguistic *copia* or for word play, Parolles also serves as a figure of Roussillon's repressed Catalan identity. As he makes trouble with words through

boasts, lies, and taunts, Parolles represents the words that betray: words that evade an effort to forge straight genealogical lines, and simple hierarchies. His speeches thus perform Roussillon's history of linguistic and cultural difference: a history that cannot be conveyed by one simple word, France, but instead must be designated by multiple and conflicting signifiers and identities.

Parolles urges Bertram to pursue the Florentine wars, a war that the French king is not explicitly supporting, and that is, moreover, dividing the nobility of France, with some taking the Florentine side and others the Sienese.<sup>24</sup> Parolles insists to Bertram that "France is a dog-hole, and it no more merits / The treat of a man's foot. To th'wars!" (2.3.249–50), and that "France is a stable, we that dwell in't jades / Therefore t'th war!" (2.3.261–62). Describing France as a "doghole," or a "stable," Parolles constructs France as a constricting space, and those under its control, those that accept its limits, as "dogs" or "jades." Of course, we first meet Parolles railing against virginity: he hates the idea of any enclosures, of small, constricted spaces and he regards unviolated sites of purity and sacredness as limiting, restrictive—he prefers, instead, the wide open blowings-up of sex and pregnancy. France here is, like virginity itself, something to be punctured, something to be destroyed, something to be altered.

Describing himself, promiscuously, as a companion "to any count, to all counts. To what is man" (2.3.184), Parolles embraces multiple identities and possibilities, instead of attaching himself singularly to Bertram and to the related conception of a French-governed Roussillon. As a result, Parolles's fate hinges upon the issue of betrayal. He is set up by the French Lord Dumaine and Bertram, Count of Roussillon, who recognize that Parolles has the capacity and willingness to betray them, in other words, to dismantle their pretensions. Punished like Malvolio, Parolles experiences what must be his greatest nightmare: to be shut away, "dark and safely locked" (4.1.81). However, his Houdini-like escape illustrates the ultimate, irrepressible freedom of language. At the end of the play, this "most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker" (3.6.8) is vindicated by offering one of the play's most lasting and insightful truths, which is that Bertram loves Helena "as a man loves a woman," which is to say "he loved her, sir, and loved her not" (5.3.243). Parolles's comment not only describes Bertram's fecklessness, and the dynamics of love and fidelity, but also the truth about Roussillon's history: it both is and is not French. As Helena's story illustrates, we may want things very much to be a certain way, and take

pains to make it so, but lovers and histories seldom fall into place the way we would like them to.

Parolles is not the only character in the play who undermines the construct of a "French" Roussillon. Jokes such as Lavatch's line about "Charbon the puritan and old Poysam the papist" (1.3.40–41) constitute a contemporary allusion to the Wars of Religion that divide France, focusing on the nearby Navarre. A curious interchange between Lavatch and Lafew recalls the successes of Edward, the Black Prince, in claiming French territory for England during the Hundred Years' War:

*Lavatch.* Why, sir, if I cannot serve you, I can serve as great a prince as you are.

*Lafew.* Who's that? A Frenchman?

*Lavatch.* Faith, sir, 'a has an English maine, but his fisnomy is more hotter in France than there.

*Lafew.* What prince is that?

*Lavatch.* The black prince, sir, alias the prince of darkness, alias the devil.

(4.5.29–34)

This apparently marginal or offhand snippet of dialogue conjures a France divided by warfare, a France conquered by the English. It offers an alternative vision of France that qualifies the all-powerful imperial center presented in the play's first act.

Through the play, Bertram and the Countess of Roussillon enact a dramatic disavowal of Frenchness. When she learns that Bertram has fled Helena and his marriage responsibilities to join the Tuscan wars, the Countess states, to Helena: "He was my son, / But I do wash his name out of my blood, / And thou art all my child" (3.2.56–59). Disowning her son, if not actually disinheriting him, the Countess removes his name—that is, the name of Roussillon—from her blood, erasing the identity that seemed, at the play's beginning, so deeply held and ineradicable. Even more surprising is Bertram's susceptibility to Parolles's remarks about France as a doghouse. As he embarks on the Italian wars, Bertram states, "Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France" (3.2.67). Here, he is using his inheritance—an inheritance one would expect him to consider incorruptible—to adopt a bargaining position, holding it ransom until Helena drops her claim to him.<sup>25</sup> In this key scene, Bertram, Helena, and the Countess repeat the phrase "nothing in France" five times, with an

incantational quality, which, as it enacts a disavowal of France and Frenchness, calls attention to France's tenuous hold over Roussillon.

At first, Helena appears easily absorbed into France and the idea of a French-controlled Roussillon. When the Countess describes her as "a maid too virtuous / For the contempt of empire" (3.2.26–27), she uses France and the French king to measure Helena's virtue. Through her own merit, Helena gains entry into the upper echelons of French society: the girl from the provinces is accepted and rewarded by those at the center of the action. But Helena is not motivated by politics, or even by ambition.

*Countess.* This was your motive for Paris, was it?

*Helena.* My lord your son made me to think of this;  
Else Paris, and the medicine, and the king,  
Had from the conversation of my thoughts  
Haply been absent then.

(1.3.202–7)

Helena's dogged pursuit of Bertram resembles nothing so much as the tunnel vision of the typical academic. Even Helena's memories of her father, the fabled Gerard de Narbonne, fade in the face of her love for Bertram, her "bright particular star" (1.3.86). About her father she muses, absentmindedly, "What was he like? I have forgot him" (1.3.81–82). The Countess misunderstands Helena, thinking that she is sick with mourning instead of desire: "The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheek" (1.3.37–39). Shakespeare scripts Helen's love for Bertram as a dialogue between past and present: Erotic passion, with its hoping-against-all-hope for a happy future, not the loss of her father in the past, makes Helena pale. She is moved, neither by history and genealogy nor by empire, but by love.

Not one, therefore, to live in the past, Helena decisively dismantles the construct of a French Roussillon. Taking Bertram at his word, "Nothing in France, until he has no wife! / Thou shalt have none, Rossillion, none in France; / Then hast thou all again" (3.2.91–94), she vows to remove herself from the picture: "He is too good and fair for death and me / Whom I myself embrace to set him free" (3.4.16–17). Declaring herself "St. Jacques' pilgrim" (3.4.4), Helena chooses pilgrimage over death and heads, not west to Santiago de Compostela, but east to Italy. This creates a smaller, not a greater distance, between herself and Bertram. Numerous readers have sought to ex-

plain how and why Helena believes Santiago de Compostela to be en route to Florence; I would suggest that she is embracing the idea of St. Jacques: a name associated with Santiago, certainly, but also with the kings of Aragon. She brings Bertram into the orbit of an alternative Aragonese history of Roussillon.<sup>26</sup>

Helena's independence thus brings her closer to Parolles. Although they appear, initially, to be sparring partners, Helena actually manages to beat Parolles at his own game. She wins their virginity debate by offering an alternative perspective on virginity (one that is infinitely more romantic). By devoting herself to the "one" love, she offers Bertram an infinite variety that rivals Cleopatra:

There shall your master have a thousand loves,  
A mother, and a mistress, and a friend,  
A phoenix, captain, and an enemy,  
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,  
A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear

(1.1.141-45)

As the play progresses, Helena adopts a variety of different roles and subject positions: the obedient daughter, a vessel for her father's practice,<sup>2</sup> the self-denying pilgrim, and, of course, the Florentine Diana. The ease with which Helena adopts and discards these identities, like Parolles's "love and does not love" remark, presents a succession of contradictory possibilities. Highlighting the limitations of a Roussillon presented simply, and rigidly, as French, Helena embodies the multivalent, multifaceted history of Roussillon.

Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* invokes and then proceeds to undermine the French claim to Roussillon. It replaces the brief medieval, imperial history of Frankish-controlled Roussillon with gestures toward flexibility and multiplicity that are more consistent with the history of this border zone. Nevertheless, the play makes no explicit mention of Catalonia, Majorca, or Aragon. Of course, Shakespeare is a playwright who imagines Bohemia with a seacoast. We cannot burden Shakespeare with the expectation of strict accuracy: He was far less interested in reproducing the facts than in transforming them into something even more "rich and strange." Nevertheless, his handling of locations such as Elsinore, Scotland, and Italy reflects an awareness of the complex histories tied to certain places. As I have suggested here, Shakespeare's Roussillon is produced, not by ignorance or indifference, but by deliberately foregrounding its French history and suppressing its Catalan history.

Why does Shakespeare suppress the dominant Catalan strain of Roussillon's medieval and early modern history? As Richard Wilson has observed, Spain constitutes a "conspicuous absence" as a setting for Shakespeare's plays, and he dubs Aragon "the Spanish heartland of the Counter-Reformation."<sup>27</sup> England, of course, had its own particular history with Catherine of Aragon, whose marriage to and divorce from Henry VIII produced long-standing questions about Elizabeth I's legitimacy. In 1603, when the question of Elizabeth's succession remained open, it may have seemed more prudent to stick with the legendary quality of Boccaccio's French Roussillon. By the time of Philip II, Catalonia and Aragon existed within the embrace of Castilian Spain. They formed part of another imperial dominion, one that despite the defeat of the Spanish Armada, remained a daunting and wide-reaching world power to which England aspired (as opposed to the divided France). However, a Catalonian history that goes unmentioned may be even more notable in its absence: especially when the brittle world of "French" Roussillon, identified with a Carolingian history that Lafew's comment suggests is mere bunk, is punctured by the words and deeds of Parolles and Helena. As the play as a whole dismantles the medieval construct of a French Roussillon, Shakespeare is not so much passing over the historical realities as he is channeling them into a binary that opposes the mists of nostalgia, which cover French Roussillon, a nostalgia for something that never really existed in the first place, to an energy of multiplicity, subversion, and, most importantly, triumph.

## NOTES

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1. William Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. Russell Fraser, with an introduction by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). All text references are act, scene, and line of this edition.

2. Shakespeare's spelling is "Rossillion." The folio reads, on one occasion, "Rossignol," in reference to the Count: a French term that means "nightingale" or, more colloquially, "picklock." This may be a punning joke on Bertram's failings as a lover, or just on his character, as the Cambridge editor suggests: a "rossignol d'arcadie" is a braying jackass.

3. See Howard Cole, *The "All's Well" Story from Boccaccio to Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981). Painter preserves Boccaccio's spelling of "Ros-

siglione." This may produce a little confusion, as there is a Rossiglione in Italy, as well as a French village in Provence called Roussillon. However, Boccaccio makes it clear that the story takes place in France, and the proximity of Narbonne and the province of Roussillon makes it logical that Boccaccio is thinking of the French province of Roussillon.

4. Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*, p. 47. On the play's geography, see Richard Wilson, "'To Great St. Jaques Bound': *All's Well That Ends Well* in Shakespeare's Europe," in *Shakespeare et l'Europe de la Renaissance*, ed. Pierre Kapitaniak and Yves Peyré (Paris: Société Française Shakespeare, 2004), 273–90, which focuses upon the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella; and Karen Bamford, "Foreign Affairs: The Search for the Lost Husband in *All's Well That Ends Well*," *Early Theatre* 8:2 (2005), 57–72 <http://www.earlytheatre.ca/et8—2.htm/>, which handles mainly the Italian locations.

5. See John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5–7.

6. See Williams, *The French Fetish*.

7. William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

8. See Robert O. Lindsay and John Neu, eds., *French Political Pamphlets 1514–1648* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

9. See Richard Wilson's article in this volume, and Yates, *French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*. See also Hugh Richmond, "Shakespeare's Navarre," 193–216, and his elaboration in *Puritans and Libertines*.

10. See my article, "*All's Well That Ends Well* and the Art of Retrograde Motion," in *New Approaches to "All's Well That Ends Well"*, ed. Gary Waller (New York: Routledge, 2006), 98–110.

11. See *All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. G. K. Hunter, Arden Shakespeare (London: Routledge, 1959), xxv.

12. See Lisa Jardine, "Cultural Confusion and Shakespeare's Learned Heroines: 'These are Old Paradoxes,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987): 1–18, and *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1983).

13. My sources for the history of Roussillon are Claude Colomer, *Histoire du Roussillon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), and Jean Sagnes, ed., *Nouvelle Histoire du Roussillon* (Perpignan, France: Editions du Trabucaire, 1999). Jesús Mestre i Campi, ed., *Diccionari d'història de Catalunya* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1998).

14. Linda Paterson, "The South," in *France in the Central Middle Ages, 900–1200*. Short Oxford History of France, ed. Marcus Bull (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103.

15. Recalling the famous Salic Law speech in *Henry V*, in which King Henry claims the throne of France through the female line, Lafew's reference to "King Pippen" frames Helena's medical expertise as a form of daughterly inheritance: "King Pepen . . . Did, as heir general, being descended of Blithild, which was daughter to king Clothair, / Make claim and title to the crown of France" (1.2.65–68).

16. These romances were well known in Shakespeare's England: Caxton's life of Charlemagne, *Thystorye and lyf of the noble and crysten prynce Charles the grete kynge of Fraunce* (1485), was a close translation of the French prose romance *Fierabras*, which

drew upon the Charlemagne material in the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais (material that also provided the source for the Middle English romance, *Sir Ferumbras*). See *The English Charlemagne Romances I: Sir Ferumbras*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage, EETS ES, No. 34 (London: Early English Text Society, 1966), and *The English Charlemagne Romances III and IV: The Lyf of Charles the Grete Translated by William Caxton*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage EETS ES, No. 36 (London: Early English Text Society, 1967). For discussion of Caxton's printing of the life of Charlemagne, see William Kuskin, "Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture," *English Literary History* 66 (1999): 511–51.

17. My edition is Taylor, ed., *Henry V*.

18. Bernd Schneidmüller, "Constructing Identities of Medieval France," in Bull, *France in the Central Middle Ages*, 15.

19. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. V. Branca (Torino: Einaudi, 1992). Howard Cole proposes as Boccaccio's source the Burgundian romance, *Le Chevalereux Comte d'Artois* (although he concedes the influence may have also worked in the other direction). According to this romance, the Comte d'Artois rescues a count of Roussillon from the aggressions of a Catalan prince: a plot line that, as Cole observes, resonates with the contemporary political situation in Roussillon. See Cole, *The "All's Well" Story*, 34–39.

20. See J. M. Rigg, trans., *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*, (London: David Campbell, 1921).

21. Like the chanson de geste, courtly love served political as well as aesthetic (and personal) ends, forging alliances and confirming community, providing the imaginative and metaphorical framework for cultural self-definition. On the power and prestige of southwestern French women, see Fredric L. Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Theodore Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); and Catherine Léglu and Marcus Bull, eds., *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Cambridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2005).

22. Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 190. Henry VIII's sister Mary had a brief marriage to Louis XII in 1514. For discussion, see my article, "Mary Tudor's French Tutors: Renaissance Dictionaries and the Language of Love," *Dictionaries* 21 (2000): 37–51.

23. *Gran diccionari de la llengua catalana* <http://www.grec.net/home/cel/dicc.htm>, sv. "Parolejar."

24. As the King says:

Farewell, young lords, these warlike principles  
Do not throw from you; and you, my lords, farewell.  
Share the advice betwixt you; if both gain all,  
The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received.  
And is enough for both

(2.1.1–5)

25. Even more than the Countess, of course, Bertram is Roussillon: the folio identifies him as "Ros." and "Ro.," whereas the Countess is defined, more simply, as "Mother."



26. On this, see Bamford, "Foreign Affairs" and Wilson, "To Great St. Jaques Bound."

27. See Wilson, "To Great St. Jaques Bound," 272-73. Wilson also notes "the provocative trick of setting happy endings in Habsburg territories of the Mediterranean, Belgium, and the Holy Roman Empire."